The Stories of Modern Dervishes in Australia

The Founding Years

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Salih Yücel

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Contents

CHAPTER ONE
The Arrival Of Muslims In Australia 13

CHAPTER TWO
The First Hizmet Volunteers In Melbourne 43

CHAPTER THREE
Hoca Efendi's Visit To Australia 109

CHAPTER FOUR
The Hizmet Movement Pioneers Of Sydney 137

CHAPTER FIVE
The First Dormitory, School In Sydney And Melbourne 193

CHAPTER SİX
Seeds Sprouting In Adelaide, Perth, And Brisbane 233

CHAPTER SEVEN
Unforgettable Memories 263

Foreword

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

All praise be to Allah, the Almighty, who created and fashioned everything with wisdom, as countless as the atoms in the universe. May blessings and peace be upon the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), the sun of both worlds, as numerous as all of His creations.

The Holy Qur'an is not a history book, yet it frequently mentions past nations and prophets so that we may learn from their experiences. The same can be found in the hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Understanding the past and drawing lessons from it is of the utmost importance for the happiness of humanity in this world and the hereafter. This is also a universal value.

Herodotus (484-425 BC) once said, "The purpose of my historical research is to ensure that the history of humanity is not forgotten." This statement underscores the significance of history for humanity.

Ibn Khaldun (d. 1406) remarked, "The past resembles the future as much as water resembles water," highlighting the critical importance of history in understanding the future.

The renowned British historian Arnold Toynbee (d. 1975) stated, "History is the story of the rise and fall of civilisations," emphasising its role in comprehending the development and decline of civilisations. His work, A Study of History, delves deeply into this subject.

Fethullah Gülen once said, "History is the memory of nations." This statement underscores history's critical role in understanding a nation's identity and culture. He also noted, "Those who do not know their past cannot build their future," highlighting the importance of history in shaping the future.

Teaching history plays a fundamental role in cultivating knowledgeable and engaged individuals. Understanding and teaching the history of the Hizmet Movement fosters a sense of identity and belonging, particularly among future generations. It prepares them socially, culturally, religiously,

and psychologically to serve better. Additionally, it helps individuals analyse historical events deeply and develop critical thinking skills. History provides insights into how past events shape the present, which is crucial for understanding societal structures and making informed decisions.

Historical studies enable individuals to recognise their potential roles in shaping society and instil a sense of power and responsibility. Scholars argue that history education should be advocated for its ability to develop critical thinking, understand social dynamics, and empower individuals. This is a vital element for active and conscious participation in society.

This book is adorned with verses from the Qur'an, their interpretations, noble hadiths, and commentaries. It is also enriched by the lives of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), his companions, Imam Ghazali, Imam Rabbani, Bediüzzaman, the esteemed Hoca Efendi, and the devoted individuals who dedicated themselves to the Hizmet Movement's spiritual, social, educational and social activities. In this work, you will also find unique insights about the late Hoca Efendi and Mehmet Ali Şengül that cannot be found elsewhere.

My primary goal in writing this book is for myself to learn and reflect. Bediüzzaman Said Nursi (d. 1960) often addressed his soul while writing his works, saying, "O my soul!" Indeed, as I wrote this book, I approached it with the same principle and felt its profound spiritual, social, and cultural benefits in my life. I did not merely write this book; I lived it.

To document the history of the Hizmet Movement in Australia, I interviewed over 50 people and listened to their stories. Some could not hold back their tears as they shared their memories, nor could I. The sacrifices made were so immense that I can only describe them as the shadows of the walking Companions of the Prophet in our time. Those who view the world through a materialistic lens might call them "mad," especially if they are unaware of the lives of the Prophet's companions. Hasan al-Basri, a great figure from the Tabi'een generation, once said, "If you had seen the Companions, you would have called them mad. And if they had seen you, they would have called you mad."

In this book, you will read about the immense sacrifices made to lay the foundations of the Hizmet Movement in Australia and the tears shed in the process. For instance, you will witness how a student donated all the money in his pocket and bank account to support educational activities. Some donated

40% or 50% of their earnings to ensure that young people did not fall into evil ways and that children received a good education. An elderly woman, during a fundraising meeting, willingly donated her gold bracelets and earrings to build a dormitory. This echoes the story of the female companions of the Prophet who donated their jewellery when he asked for financial support for an expedition.

This book consists of numerous examples from the early years of the Hizmet Movement. Those attached to worldly matters may struggle to understand these sacrifices as they cannot feel the spiritual joy of giving. Only those who embody such selflessness can genuinely comprehend the actions of a woman who invited many students into her home despite having three or four children and provided them with education.

I have titled this book "The Stories of Modern Dervishes in Australia: The Founding Years." If Allah grants me life, the second volume will cover "institutionalisation," and the third will focus on "integration." I hope future researchers will delve deeper into these topics and produce even more remarkable works.

While writing and compiling this book, I followed the methodology of the early Islamic scholars. Just as Ibn Sa'd in his Tabaqat and Ibn al-Athir (d. 1233) in Usd al-Ghaba avoided polemics and refrained from mentioning anything that could be misunderstood about the companions, I have done the same. Despite their sacrifices and virtues, the companions also made mistakes in their ijtihad (independent reasoning). These mistakes were meant to teach people like us how to learn from errors and correct them. However, their mistakes were like "a camel's ear" compared to their virtues. Great Islamic scholars approached their errors with the mindset that "their mistakes are like our rewards." Therefore, they rarely focused on their mistakes and instead presented them as models for humanity. Each companion was a walking embodiment of the Sunnah.

I followed the same methodology in this book. I did not delve deeply into the disagreements or misunderstandings among the Hizmet affiliates or volunteers. Their differences primarily stemmed from differing opinions on improving the movement and variations in ijtihad. Of course, personal egos or misguided emotions sometimes played a role. I have tried to highlight the positive aspects of these noble individuals so that future generations may emulate their virtues.

While compiling the information, I used pseudonyms for individuals to comply with university research ethics and because many did not wish to be identified. One prominent figure said, "Do not even write my name on my gravestone, so I may be forgotten." Sadly, while conducting this research, I witnessed the ongoing brutal oppression of Hizmet affiliates and volunteers in Turkey over the past decade, including arrests, imprisonment, and torture. One individual, who endured days of torture in police custody, told me, "When they transferred me from the police station to prison, I was overjoyed as if we were going to paradise because I hoped to escape the torture." This person, and perhaps thousands like him, endured such oppression. They saw prison as a paradise compared to the torture they faced.

By the time this book was written, nearly 750,000 people had been detained, around 180,000 imprisoned, and a significant number convicted. More than a third of those arrested and imprisoned were women, ranging in age from 15 to 88. Thousands of children and infants entered prison with their mothers, and many babies grew up behind bars. An Iraqi Kurdish scholar once asked, "Even Abu Jahl did not harm women. How can this be done in Turkey in the name of Islam?" None of us have an answer to this. Despite all this, the Hizmet Affiliates and volunteers demonstrated a peaceful model of humanity in their response.

Many Hizmet volunteers in Australia could not return to Turkey. Their parents, siblings, and relatives passed away, but they could not attend their funerals. A sick Hizmet volunteer's mother, speaking to her son from the hospital, said, "My son, I am very ill and may die soon. But do not, under any circumstances, come to Turkey. Do not come because your mother is sick. If you come, they will arrest you, and my heart will not withstand it, and I will die." This volunteer had been abroad for nearly 25 years, yet he was still labelled a terrorist. Despite all this, these devoted individuals continued their duties and services without faltering. Future historians will struggle to describe their patience, forgiveness, and mercy adequately. Never in history has such widespread oppression been inflicted on a Muslim community. Labelling millions of innocent, unarmed people as terrorists is the work of those who have lost their humanity.

However, we must look at the past as destiny and the future with free will. Those who endured this oppression, including those in Australia, will become the sultans of hearts and spiritual guides.

I recorded the information I gathered and sent the transcripts to the individuals I interviewed for verification. Some corrected minor errors, while others did not respond, so I assumed the text was accurate. I strived to convey the information as faithfully as possible. However, I occasionally added intermediary sentences to ensure clarity and publishability without altering the meaning. I also used AI and Grammarly to make specific sentences more readable and suitable for publication.

In the first chapter, I present various historians' views on the arrival of Muslims in Australia 700-800 years before Europeans. I also discuss the activities of consuls appointed to Australia during the reign of Ottoman Sultan Abdulhamid II and briefly mention the first Turkish immigrants who arrived in 1968.

The second chapter covers the first Hizmet volunteers who came to Australia between 1982 and 1994, as well as those in Melbourne who supported the movement during this period. You will read their life stories and their sacrifices, often with tears. You will also learn about the late Mehmet Ali Şengül, whose tears and compassion touched the hearts of many.

The third chapter takes you back in time as you read about the late Fethullah Gülen Hoca Efendi's visit to Australia, his words, actions, and the lessons he imparted through his demeanour. You will also relive unforgettable memories of Hoca Efendi and say, "Ah, those were the days!" Each memory is a lesson in itself.

The fourth chapter is the Sydney version of the second chapter. You will read about the beautiful dreams that came true, often with tears.

The fifth chapter describes the activities of the dersanes and dormitories in Sydney and Melbourne, as well as the sacrifices made by local businesspeople and women. You will feel as though you are among them.

The sixth chapter covers the early Hizmet affiliates' activities in Adelaide, Perth, and Brisbane, the hardships they endured, and the divine blessings they received.

The seventh chapter consists of unforgettable, deeply instructive memories. Each memory is a lesson that will impact your life.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all the Hizmet affiliates and volunteers who dedicated their valuable time to this work. Their tears are as precious as the diamonds of paradise. Any shortcomings in this book are mine, while all its virtues belong to Allah. This book is a humble effort to document the early

years of the Hizmet Movement in Australia. I believe that more comprehensive works will be written in the future, God willing. I hope this book will inspire many more works on the history of Hizmet in Australia.

Salih Yücel
Melbourne
March 2025

CHAPTER ONE

The Arrival Of Muslims In Australia

This chapter will first address some scholarly studies regarding the arrival of Muslims in Australia centuries before Europeans. It will then discuss the arrival of the Ottomans, the activities of Ottoman societies established in Australia, and the work of consuls appointed to Sydney during the reign of Sultan Abdulhamid II. Finally, it will briefly explain how the first wave of Turkish immigrants arriving in Sydney in 1968 was received.

1.1 The Early Arrival of Muslims in Australia

Islam has a history in Australia that predates European colonisation by centuries. Islamic history holds a significant place in understanding Australia's cultural and historical development. Muslim influence in Australia dates back to a time long before European colonialism. It is likely that the arrival of Muslims in Australia and the traces they left behind began as early as the 800s and continued into the 1900s. The Indigenous people of Australia have inhabited the continent for over 65,000 years, and historical sources indicate that during this time, there were interactions between northern Indigenous groups and Muslim sailors from Southeast Asia and beyond.[1]

From the 16th century onward, Makassan fishermen from Indonesia engaged in trade and cultural exchanges with the Indigenous people of northern Australia. These interactions created a unique cultural fusion, introducing new linguistic terms, artistic influences, and even intermarriages between the two groups. The arrival of Afghan camel drivers in the 19th century marked a significant turning point. These Muslim cameleers played crucial roles in exploring Australia's interior and infrastructure projects, such as the Overland Telegraph Line and the Ghan Railway. Their contributions left a lasting legacy, including early mosques and cultural imprints in rural communities, which helped shape modern Australia.

1.2. The Arrival of Muslims in Southeast Asia

Historical records indicate that Muslims arrived on the island of Sumatra in Indonesia as early as the 7th century. According to prominent Indonesian scholars Yusny Saby and Azyumardi Azra, Islam reached the Indonesian

1 David Sneddon, A history of faith-based micro, meso and macro dialogue between Muslims and non-Muslims in Australia prior to 9/11 Doctor of Philosophy, Australian Catholic University, (2021). p 102.

archipelago during the time of Caliph Uthman.[2] Snouck Hurgronje notes that Chinese sources mention an Arab sheikh governing a town on the western coast of Sumatra in 674 CE.[3] This record indicates that Islam reached Indonesia during the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad's companions. In his work, Pasy Izharul Haqq, Ishak Al-Sheikh Makarani writes that around 100 Arabs from the Quraysh tribe arrived in northern Sumatra in 800 CE to spread Islam.[4] This suggests that local Muslim communities may have invited them.

According to legend, Merah Silau, the king of Pasai in northern Sumatra, dreamed of the Prophet Muhammad in 832 CE. In the dream, the Prophet taught him Islamic knowledge. Upon waking, the king found himself circumcised and realised he had learned Arabic and how to recite the Quran. He felt he had become a Muslim, but he was left with many unanswered questions: What is Islam? Who is Muhammad? What are the requirements of this faith? How should he interpret his dream? While pondering these questions in his palace, one of his men informed him that Muslim merchants had arrived at the port. The king thought, "This is no coincidence," and invited the merchants to his palace. From them, he learned about Islam and how to pray. Similar stories are told in other nearby islands.[5]

It is unlikely that Muslims who travelled as far as these regions neglected Australia, which is not far from Indonesia. Muslims probably reached Australia as early as the 8th or 9th century.

During World War II, five copper coins from Kilwa, a significant Swahili port in present-day Tanzania, were discovered in Arnhem Land in northern Australia. These coins, dating back 700 to 900 years, are among the

2 Yusny Saby, Islam and Social Change: The Role of Ulama in Ache Society, PhD thesis, Temple University, 1995, Azyumardi Azra, The transmission of Islamic reformism to Indonesia: Networks of Middle Eastern and Malay-Indonesian 'Ulama' in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, PhD thesis, Colombia University, 1992 p 16-47

3 W. P. Groeneveldt, "Notes on the Malay Archipelago and Malacca, Compiled from Chinese Sources", Verhandelingen van het Bataviaasch Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen, XXXIX, Den Haag 1880, p 14-15 cited in Ismail Hakkı Gürsoy, Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı Ansiklopedisi, İstanbul 1995, 11/194.

4 Dhuhri, S, Dayah Dalam Tiga Phase Perkembangan Menelaal Berbasis Perubahan yang Telah Punah cited in Dr Zulfikar Ali Bhutto& Zamzami Zanuiddin Modernisation of Dayah in Aceh, The Islamic Quarterly, V 60, 3 (2016):308.

5 Taylor, Jean Gelman. Indonesia: Peoples and Histories, Yale University Press, 2003. P 112, ProQuest Ebook Central, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/acu/detail.action?docID=3420328.

oldest foreign artifacts found in Australia. The Kilwa coins, now housed in Sydney's Powerhouse Museum, had previously been found only twice outside Tanzania—once in Zimbabwe and once in Oman.

Source: Australian Geographic[6]

The historical connections between Australia's Indigenous peoples and Islam date back centuries. As Ganter notes, "When we think of Indigenous cultural strongholds today, we think of the Red Centre, Arnhem Land, Kimberley, and the Torres Strait," which are also the regions with the most extensive historical interactions between Indigenous peoples and Muslims.[7]

The discovery of coins similar to those found in Oman supports the theory that Omani Muslim sailors may have arrived on Australia's northern coasts as early as the 8th century. Džavid Haverić claims that these contacts occurred in the 10th century, based on a map compiled by al-Khwarizmi (d. 850) in 820 CE[8]. Al-Khwarizmi, in his significant work (below map).[9] The Shape of the Earth included many Southeast Asian territories, including northern Australia, in his geographical studies. His map of northern Australia is one of the most distinguished works documenting Muslim exploration of the continent. According to Haveric, this is a crucial historical fact that enriches Australia's history, represents a valuable achievement in Islamic historiography, and contributes significantly to preserving the early spirit of Australia's cultural and religious diversity. Al-Khwarizmi's 820 CE map (held at the University of Strasbourg, France) depicts northern Australia southeast of the Horn of Africa and the Red Sea,

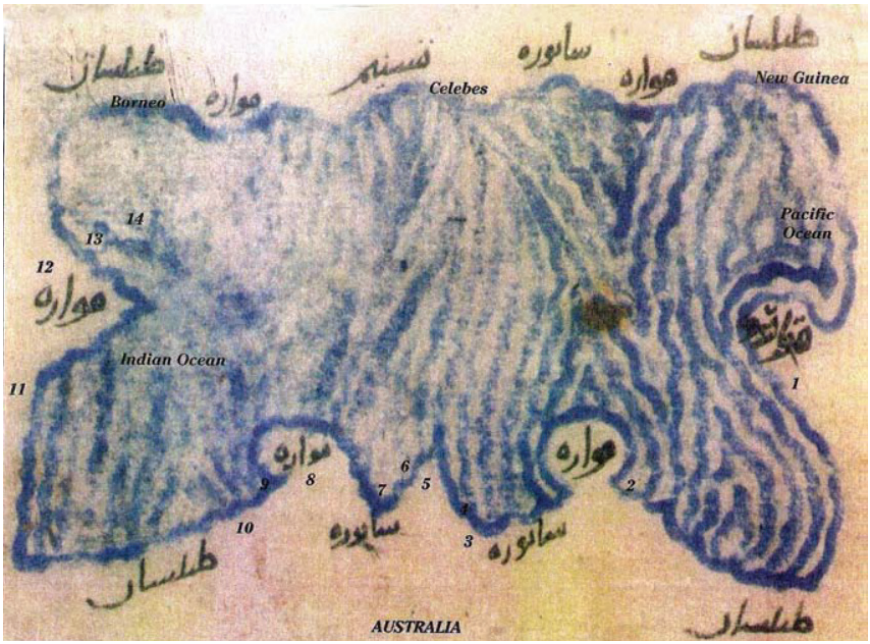
6 Mike Owen , Unravelling the mystery of Arnhem Land's ancient African coins, Australian Geographic 7 August 2014, https://www.australiangeographic.com.au/topics/history-culture/2014/08/mystery-of-ancient-african-coins-found-in-australia/ accessed 13.08.2024.

7 Abu Bakr S Cook & Salih Yucel, Australia's Indigenous Peoples and Islam: Philosophical and Spiritual Convergences between Belief Structures,Comparative Islamic Studies, 2019.

8 Haveric, History of Islam and Muslims in Australia: Early Encounters, Settlements and Communities Prior to the 1940's, 10.

9 Haveric, History of Islam and Muslims in Australia, p 69.

extending from the 80 Mile Beach in Western Australia to Roebuck Bay. While Kimberley is not shown, the Northern Territory and the V-shaped Gulf of Carpentaria are clearly visible.[10]



The First Map of Australia by Muhammad ibn Musa al-Khwarizmi (820 CE)[11]

The first map of Australia, drawn by Muhammad ibn Musa al-Khwarizmi in 820 CE, highlights the following features:

1. Rabaul
2. Milne Bay
3. Cape Melville
4. Princess Charlotte Bay
5. Cape York
6. Albatross Bay (Weipa)
7. Gulf of Carpentaria

10 Haveric, 70.

11 Haveric, History of Islam and Muslims in Australia: Early Encounters, Settlements and Communities Prior to the 1940's, p. 10

8. Northern Territory
9. Joseph Bonaparte Gulf
10. Eighty Mile Beach, Western Australia
11. Africa
12. Horn of Africa
13. Red Sea
14. Arabia

This unique map shows that Muslim explorers reached Australia and sailed along its coasts as early as the 8th century. However, such claims need more substantial evidence. Reports of early contact in the 15th century by the Chinese Admiral Zheng He and his fleet also exist, but the destruction of records makes it difficult to substantiate these claims.[12]

While much of our knowledge about early Islamic interactions revolves around the Macassans, there is evidence of contact with another group known as the Baijini, who may have arrived before or concurrently with the Macassans. Worsley notes, "The Indigenous people firmly assert the existence of another group called the Baijini, who came before the Macassans."[13] If true, this suggests that Islam's presence in Australia may date back much earlier than previously thought. Further research and evidence are needed to confirm these claims, but historical accounts support the existence of the Baijini, who appear to have brought Islam to Australia.

Burrumarra emphasises that the Indigenous people regarded the Baijini as distinct from the later Macassans. References describe them as having "light skin" and possessing advanced technologies such as iron forging, weaving, agriculture, and construction techniques. Oral histories from the Dholtji (Cape Wilberforce) region in Northeast Arnhem Land mention large communities engaged in blacksmithing and agriculture, visits by armoured men, and discussions about "Allah, who lives in the sky, above Cape Wilberforce and in the red clouds of sunset." [14]

12 M McCarthy, "Zheng He and the Great Southland," (The Zheng He down West Ocean, Chinese Overseas Discussion Forum: Western Australian Museum, 2005), 388-401.

13 Worsley, "Early Asian Contacts with Australia," 1-2.

14 David Sneddon, Indigenous Australians and Muslims: A History of Micro and Meso Dialogue Prior to the Twentieth Century, Australian Journal of Islamic Studies 5, no. 1 (2020): 67-87.

Australia's early Islamic history extends beyond the Macassans, and future research may shed more light on this period. During this time, fishermen from the Makassar region in northern Indonesia regularly visited Australia's northern coasts, particularly Arnhem Land, to harvest sea cucumbers (trepang), a valuable commodity in Asia, especially China.

Throughout the 1600s and 1700s, Makassan fishermen continued to visit Australia's shores, establishing temporary settlements and engaging in trade with the Indigenous Aboriginal communities. This interaction influenced Aboriginal lifestyles and economic activities. These expeditions persisted for nearly 300 years until the early 1900s, when the Australian government imposed restrictions.

The Makassans developed trade and cultural relationships with the Aboriginal people, exchanging goods, language, and cultural practices. Their influence on Aboriginal culture is still evident today through certain words and rituals. An Indigenous scholar once told me, "Our golden age was before the arrival of the Europeans, when we had relationships with the Muslims. They respected our culture and beliefs and introduced us to the technology of the time."[15]

The Makassans did not establish permanent settlements but fostered a relationship of mutual respect with the Aboriginal people. Their Islamic faith led to the exchange of religious and cultural elements. For example, some Aboriginal communities adopted certain Islamic rituals and integrated them into their traditions.

Onnudottir, Possamai, and Turner argue that historical evidence "demonstrates a well-established connection between Islam and Aboriginal communities."[16] The most significant historical contacts occurred in waves, primarily involving the Makassans, Afghan cameleers, and Malay pearl divers. However, despite these connections, Aboriginal Muslims do not draw on a long historical experience of contact with Islamic life, practices, and identities.[17] While available evidence limits the full extent of these interactions, it suggests that Indigenous peoples' historical contact with Islamic life and practices was recurrent and significant enough to influence some Indigenous belief systems.

15 Azmi Wood, Personal communication, March 2012.

16 Helena Onnudottir, Adam Possamai, Bryan Turner,International Journal for the Study of New Religions, 2010, p 49-74

17 Cook & Yucel, Australia's Indigenous Peoples and Islam.

Notably, Indigenous peoples' historical engagement with Islamic beliefs surpasses that of many non-Indigenous Muslim communities in Australia.

As historian Warner observed, the Muslim influence on the spiritual practices of the Arnhem Land Indigenous people is evident. He noted the repetition of Islamic terms in certain rituals and documented these observations with the help of his Indigenous guide, Mahkarolla (d. 1957).

Researcher David Sneddon highlights the profound spiritual impact of Muslim visitors, particularly the Makassans, on the Indigenous people of the northern regions. In Arnhem Land, during rituals, the Indigenous people chant phrases like "Oh-a-ha-la!!" and "A-ha-la!!" which bear a phonetic resemblance to the Arabic word for God, "Allah." This may represent a version of the Islamic declaration of faith, "La ilaha illallah" (There is no god but Allah), possibly taught or demonstrated by Sufi Makassans. Warner's guide also identified a chant resembling the Islamic phrase "Salli ala Muhammad" (Blessings upon Muhammad).[18]

These practices suggest the integration of Islamic elements into Indigenous rituals. For example, during funerals, the phrase "Ra-bin-a-la la-ha-ma-ha-ma" is recited, which McIntosh associates with Islamic funeral rites and the transition of the deceased's soul to Allah's abode. The practice of placing soil into the grave, common in Islamic and other Abrahamic traditions, is also observed.[19]

In the 1860s, a significant transformation began in Australia as European interest in the continent grew, leading to the establishment of British colonies. This period also saw the arrival of Afghan cameleers, who played a crucial role in transporting goods across Australia's arid interior.

Afghan cameleers managed camel caravans, which were vital for transporting goods to mining regions in the outback. Their expertise in handling camels, which were well-suited to Australia's harsh desert conditions, was instrumental in the development of the country's transport system. Some researchers argue that without the cameleers, the exploration of Australia's interior might have been delayed by decades.

By 1890, the Muslim population in Australia reached approximately 3,500. Between the 1880s and 1890s, Muslims built 24 mosques across the

18 Sneddon, p 122.

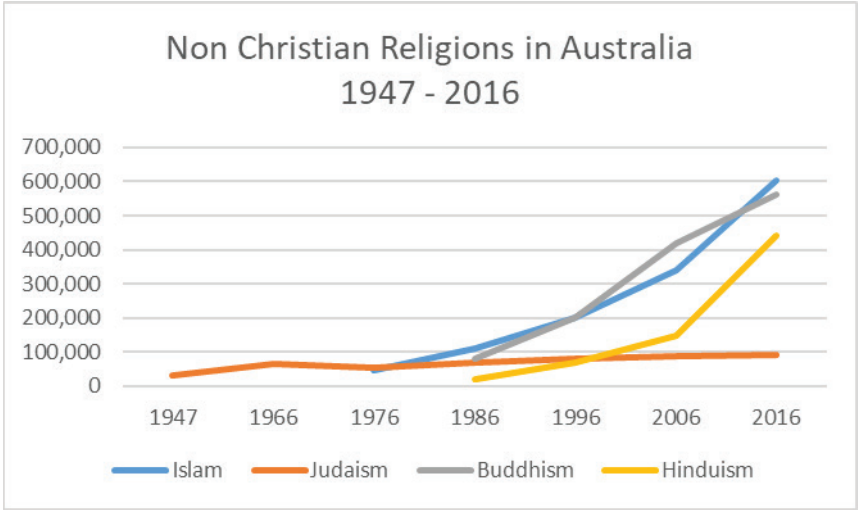
19 Sneddon, p 122.

country, including the first mosque in Adelaide in 1882, followed by others in Broken Hill (1891) and Perth (1905). These mosques became important centres for religious and cultural life, though some were later abandoned or demolished.

The early 20th century saw the implementation of the White Australia Policy in 1901, which restricted non-European immigration and hindered the growth of the Muslim community. Despite these challenges, the existing Muslim population continued to preserve their faith and culture, contributing significantly to Australia's social and economic life.

The advent of motorized transport reduced the need for Afghan cameleers, leading to a decline in the Muslim population to around 2,000. After World War I, a small group of Muslims migrated to Australia, followed by Albanians and other Balkan Muslims after World War II. Turkish Cypriots also migrated to Australia during this period.

This rich history underscores the deep and enduring connections between Islam and Australia, long before the arrival of European settlers. It highlights the resilience and contributions of Muslim communities in shaping the nation's cultural and historical landscape.



The Growth of the Muslim Population in Australia (Source: David Sneddon)[20]

20 Sneddon, p 132.

The Muslim population in Australia, which stood at around 4,000 to 5,000 in 1947, had grown to approximately 850,000 by 2024.

1.3. The Arrival of the Ottomans in Australia

The Ottoman Empire was a multinational, multi-religious, multi-ethnic state with a rich historical and cultural heritage. It encompassed not only Turks but also Syrians, Arabs, Armenians, Jews, Egyptians, and many other ethnic groups. Historically, relations between the Ottoman Empire and Australia began even before the establishment of the British Commonwealth. In the last decade of the 19th century, Tevfik Pasha, the Minister, proposed to Sultan Abdulhamid II the establishment of a consulate in Sydney. He recommended Halil Nassur Bey, who spoke Arabic, French, English, and Italian, as the first Turkish consul to Australia. The Ottoman consulate was officially established in Sydney in 1897. When Consul Halil Nassur Bey arrived in Sydney that year, there were approximately 1,000 Ottoman subjects in New South Wales. It was Ottoman policy to send consuls to countries with a significant number of Ottoman citizens. At the time, the Ottoman diaspora in Australia was predominantly composed of a Roman Catholic community, with the remainder belonging to the Greek Church and a very small number of Ottoman Muslims. According to Halil Nassur Bey's records, there were only 20 Turkish Muslims.[21]

The First Ottoman Consul, Halil Nassur Bey[22]

21 Haveric, p 193.

22 Source: Haveric, History of Islam and Muslims in Australia

The Ottoman Development Association was established in New South Wales, focusing on the rapidly growing trade between Australia and the Ottoman Empire. In 1908-09, the Turkish Ottomans in Adelaide founded the South Australian Ottoman Society, which had around 150 members. Contrary to initial impressions, the majority of the society's members were Christian, including its president, S. J. Attiah. Similar associations were established in other states, and they collaborated under the name of the Federation of Ottoman Societies of Australia.[23]

For several years, it became a tradition for the Ottoman societies in Adelaide, Sydney, and Melbourne to celebrate the anniversary of the new Ottoman Constitution. One such cultural event was held at the Adelaide Town Hall. Consul Esper Nassoor Bey travelled from Sydney to attend the program and meet with the Ottoman citizens in Adelaide. The guests included the Governor of South Australia, members of the state government, representatives of various social and municipal organisations, prominent businessmen, and leading South Australian Ottoman Society members.

1.4. Ottoman Consul Esper Nassoor Bey24

In 1908, a celebration was held to mark Ottoman freedom's historical commemoration and express appreciation for the new era. Esper Nassoor

23 Haveric, p 105.

24 Source: Haveric, History of Islam and Muslims in Australia

Bey stated, "Islam and Christianity have united in a common cause." He also acknowledged the "friendly sentiment" that existed between Ottomans and Australians and expressed hope that this sentiment would continue to grow. The first Ottoman program in South Australia was a resounding success. Three flags were hung in the hall: the Union Jack, the Ottoman crescent and star in the centre, and the colours of the Australian Commonwealth. Under the shadow of these flags, 140 representatives of Adelaide's public officials sat at tables set in a garden of palms and flowers. A striking figure—wearing a red fez with black tassels and gold lace—delivered the main speech at the brilliant gathering. This event was also a banquet in honour of the new Ottoman Constitution[25].

Ottoman Subjects and Guests Celebrating the Ottoman Constitution in 1908 (Source: Dzavid Haveric)[26]

By 1909, there were over 3,000 Ottoman subjects in Australasia (Australia, New Zealand, and the South Pacific), most of whom had settled in Australia. In 1910, Esper Nassoor Bey estimated that the Ottoman community

25 Haveric, ibid.

26 Haveric, 204.

in Australia (both Muslims and non-Muslims) numbered several thousand, with about 500 living in South Australia. However, the number of Ottoman subjects declined due to the "White Australia Policy" implemented in 1905.

During World War I, travel and migration restrictions were imposed on all Ottoman subjects. Turks and Syrians were placed under surveillance, and all Ottoman subjects, including Syrians and Lebanese, were required to report to police stations weekly to sign in. This discrimination had a negative impact on the Ottoman community, leading to a gradual decline in their numbers.

According to research, the number of Turks in Australia in 1912 was 312.[27] This number likely included Muslims, non-Muslims, Turks, and non-Turks from the Ottoman Empire, as the Turkish Republic had not yet been established. It is also probable that people from British-controlled regions, such as Cyprus, migrated to Australia. During British rule, all Cypriot citizens could apply for British passports.

Coffee Shop King: Kabel Mockbell

27 Ahmet İçduygu, Migrant as Transitional Category, Turkish Migrants in Melbourne, Australia, PhD Thesis, Australian National University, 1990.

1.5. The Ottoman Who Introduced Coffee and Coffee Shops to Australians: Kabel Mockbell

Dzavid Haveric, an expert on Australia's Islamic history, summarises the story of Kabel Mockbell, a famous Sydney café owner and coffee merchant. Born in Istanbul, Mockbell was nicknamed the "Coffee Shop King." He was one of the first Turkish Muslim citizens in Sydney and managed numerous coffee shops in the city. His mother was Egyptian, and he had served as a student in the British military forces in Egypt. He enjoyed wearing his traditional costume, described as a "blue Arab costume embroidered with gold." As a dark-skinned Muslim, he faced significant challenges. In 1907, he married Adelaide Florence, and they had three children: Lallah, Kabel Junior, and Fuad. He first applied for citizenship in 1904 but was rejected. He applied again in 1914, but this application was also denied because Turks were considered enemy aliens and were subject to the 1901 Immigration Restriction Act, which limited non-white immigration. His application was finally approved in 1926, by which time he had become a highly successful businessman.

Mockbell became a prominent figure in Sydney in the late 1890s and early 20th century. His coffee shops gained recognition when he was appointed manager of the Mocha Coffee Company at the Imperial Arcade in 1894 and later at King Street in 1898. Mockbell and his brothers sold coffee under the Fez brand, using "Fez and Arabic script" as their trademark and decorating their coffee shops with Arab motifs. He opened his first coffee shop near the corner of King and Elizabeth Streets and later developed a chain of coffee shops across the city. By 1914, he had branches in Hoskin Place (off Pitt Street), Pitt Street (near Circular Quay), King Street, Angel Place, Elizabeth Street, and Sussex Street.

Mockbell's coffee shops were popular meeting places in Sydney. By 1930, there were eight Mockbell coffee shops scattered across the city. From the beginning, Mockbell offered elaborate facilities that appealed to a broad audience. The original Oriental Café Salon at the Imperial Arcade boasted a ladies' salon, a smoking room, and separate toilets for men and women—a rarity at the time—and was large enough to accommodate 250 guests at its opening. Some of his cafés were remarkably large. In 1913, his Commerce Café on Market Street could seat 200 people, while the coffee shop in the basement of Daking House near Central Station could serve up to 600 people at once.

When Mockbell opened a café at the bottom of Pitt Street near Circular Quay, he announced that it had a separate room for ladies (with its own entrance) and a gentlemen's smoking room where all kinds of tobacco could be purchased and dominoes could be played—"the space was spacious, well-lit, and airy."

Mockbell's first coffee shop opened in the late 1880s and quickly became popular due to its unique offerings. At a time when tea was the dominant beverage, Mockbell's introduction of strong, aromatic coffee was both innovative and striking. He capitalised on the growing demand for coffee among the working class, who appreciated its affordability and energising qualities. By the early 20th century, Mockbell had expanded his business to include multiple coffee shops across Sydney. His establishments were more than just places to drink; they were meeting points where people from all walks of life could gather, discuss politics and business, and socialise. Mockbell's coffee shops played a significant role in shaping Sydney's social fabric. They were frequented by a diverse clientele, including writers, politicians, and ordinary citizens, and became informal centres of intellectual and social exchange, contributing to the city's cultural life.

This network of coffee shops earned him the nickname "King of the Coffee Shops." The economic downturn affected Mockbell's business, but not his spirit, and even at the age of 70, he was ready to start over. He employed hundreds of people in his chain of coffee shops. He was known to thousands as the man who established Sydney's first coffee shops and as a generous man. Throughout his life, he donated thousands of pounds to worthy charities, and very few knew about it. In 1915, he expressed his love for the Commonwealth in the Sunday Times: "I am an Egyptian Turk of Arab origin. I want to see the British flag flying high everywhere." Mockbell expressed his spirit of loyalty: "I would gladly give my last penny and, if necessary, my life and that of my son to defend the British Crown. I hope that friendship and goodwill will continue." Mockbell died in 1936.[28]

In Western culture, there is a belief in "original sin." According to this belief, because Adam sinned, all children born of Adam are born sinners. Perhaps this is why, when someone in a community commits a wrong or a sin, the community as a whole or tribe is held responsible and attempts are made to destroy them. Unfortunately, the same is true in the Islamic world, which

28 Haveric 204-210.

the Western world has influenced. Many people are blamed and made to suffer because of one person's mistake. However, according to the Quran, "no one is responsible for another's sin" (Quran 53:38).

During World War I, when the British attacked the Ottomans alongside Australia, Australian society at the time saw Turks, Muslims, and even Germans as potential threats. For this reason, during those years, Muslims even gave sermons in mosques declaring, "We are loyal to British society," thus demonstrating their loyalty even in mosques.[29]

1.6. Ibrahim Dellal, Grandson of the Ottoman Mufti of Cyprus

Ibrahim Dellal's brothers, Hasan and Ahmet, left Cyprus in 1946 due to increasing political and ethnic tensions between Turks and Greeks and settled in Victoria, Australia. Ibrahim often wrote letters to them. The letters he received in return made him consider moving to Australia. As his excitement grew, Ibrahim finally decided to migrate to Australia in 1948. However, his family was opposed to the idea. Moreover, his family wanted Ibrahim to stay in Cyprus and manage the family business.

When the 18-year-old Ibrahim explained his plans to his family, they tried to persuade him to stay in Cyprus. Ibrahim postponed his migration plans. He did not want to upset his family, but his desire to migrate to Australia persisted. The thought of going to Australia occupied his mind, and he eventually told his family that he would only stay in Australia for a few years and then return to Cyprus. Upon hearing this, his family said nothing and allowed him to leave.

His family took him to Limassol Port, but it was very difficult for Ibrahim to part from his family. When Ibrahim boarded the ship, his mother, father, and he were crying as they saw him off. As the ship departed, Ibrahim continued to wave to his family until they were out of sight. At the age of 18, Ibrahim migrated to the other side of the world.

Once, Ibrahim received a call from the University of Melbourne regarding translating an Ottoman text into English. He was not sure how they had found his contact information. Ibrahim did not know Ottoman Turkish, but he offered to find someone who did.

Sometime later, Ibrahim learned from an acquaintance about an Ottoman Turk named Hüseyin Ara Efendi, who had migrated from Istanbul to Geelong,

29 Haveric, ibid.

75 km southwest of Melbourne, at the end of the 19th century. Hüseyin Ara Efendi was the first Ottoman Ibrahim encountered in the 1950s. Believing that this man could read Ottoman texts, Ibrahim travelled to Geelong to meet him. Upon arriving in Geelong, Ibrahim realised that Hüseyin was elderly and blind and, therefore, unable to translate any text into English.

Ibrahim wanted to learn more about this Ottoman Turk. Despite being blind, a family member would take Hüseyin to the beach to fish. Later in the day, he would sell the fish he caught at the market. In this way, he earned a little money to support his family. He did not accept money from anyone, including government social services, because in Ottoman culture, being a burden to others was considered shameful. Hüseyin Ara Efendi wanted to protect his dignity. Later, Ibrahim lost contact with Hüseyin but heard that his children were still there. Hüseyin's principle of self-sufficiency reminded Ibrahim of his parents, evoked a sense of longing for his homeland, and left a lasting impression on his memory.

Ibrahim also met Ali Acem Efendi, a former camel driver who later became a businessman and a renowned doctor, and Ali Baba, another former camel driver, at his brother Ahmet's house. Ali Acem Efendi lived in Adelaide and would visit Dellal when he had business in Melbourne. Ali Acem shared memories of his days as a camel driver, but Ibrahim forgot most of these memories.

Ali Acem was also a herbal medicine expert. Ibrahim's sister-in-law, İclal, had a problem with her hands. After washing dishes, her hands would bleed. Medical doctors could not find a cure, but Ali Acem produced a remedy using herbs. After using the herbal medicine for a while, İclal's hands healed. Ali Acem had obtained permission from the Australian government to use such herbs for herbal treatment. Some famous people also used his products for various ailments.

Ali Acem was financially well-off. He owned a truck and transported automotive parts to major cities. When he died, there was no one to bury him, as his wife had died years earlier and his two daughters had left home years ago and cut off contact with him. The police who found Ali Acem's body retrieved a piece of paper from his pocket. It was the business card of Ibrahim Dellal's brother, Ahmet Dellal. They contacted Ahmet, but since Ahmet did not know any of Ali Acem's relatives, the police buried Ali Acem themselves. This troubled Ibrahim. "It was very painful for one of our own to die alone and for his daughters to have no connection with him."

Ibrahim was invited to give a speech at the Good Neighbourhood Council's city branch. At the time, Ibrahim was the president of the Australian Federation of Islamic Councils (AFIC). Ibrahim recounts the details of that memorable day:

"The audience was mostly women. After my speech, they began to ask questions. Their manner of asking questions seemed very sincere. One of the questions was, 'Are all Turks like you?' I replied, 'We look different, but we are similar in being hardworking, honest, virtuous and having high moral values. Our way of life is similar.' The audience seemed pleased with this answer. Someone else asked, 'Are there communists among you Turks?' Since I had had little contact with Türkiye since coming to Australia and had little knowledge of Turkish politics at the time, I gave a short answer. 'As far as I know, there are none because Turks believe in God. A believer cannot be a communist.' This answer also pleased them."

The same group invited Ibrahim to speak again. Later, they asked him to serve as a volunteer consultant at the Immigration Services. Ibrahim met with Immigration Minister Bill Snedden and suggested that the country bring immigrants from Türkiye to settle in Australia. Through this position, he volunteered to bring Turkish immigrants. Due to the positive memories of ANZAC soldiers about Turks, Turks had a good reputation in Australia. Ibrahim prayed for Turks to come to Australia and saw his prayer answered.

State Minister Vefa Karatay (left), Türkiye, Immigration Minister Billy Snedden (right). Back: Dündar İdiz (left), Zübeyir Bensan (middle), unidentified Australian official (right). Source: Turks in Australia.[30]

30 https://www.sbs.com.au/language/turkish/en/article/celebration-of-50th-anniversary-of-the-turkish-migration/a8v2r58z3

In 1967, Türkiye and Australia signed a bilateral agreement on assisted migration. Under the agreement, Australia offered migration to Turkish families as permanent immigrants. The program resulted in the Turkish-born population in Australia, mostly originally from Cyprus, increasing from 1,544 in the 1961 Census to 11,589 in 1971. According to the 1986 Census, 76% of those from Türkiye were Muslim.[31] However, in those years, 99% of Türkiye's population was Muslim. This means that Australian authorities preferred non-Muslims. The 2011 Census showed that 66,924 Australian citizens were of Turkish origin, and 32,843 were born in Türkiye. This migration project marked a turning point in the history of Muslims in Australia.

1.7. Is Australia a Land of Cannibals?

Some Turks who initially agreed to migrate to Australia changed their minds at the last minute. The Australian government sent Ibrahim to Türkiye to investigate the matter. Ibrahim met with many of these Turks and tried to determine why they were reluctant to come to Australia. Some of the answers he received surprised him. One Turk was hesitant to migrate due to stories about cannibals in Australia. Another feared that the distance between Türkiye and Australia would keep him away from Türkiye forever. Some were concerned about Türkiye's negative image in Australia after the Gallipoli War. Those who wanted to migrate asked Ibrahim about Australia's climate, housing, food, and culture.

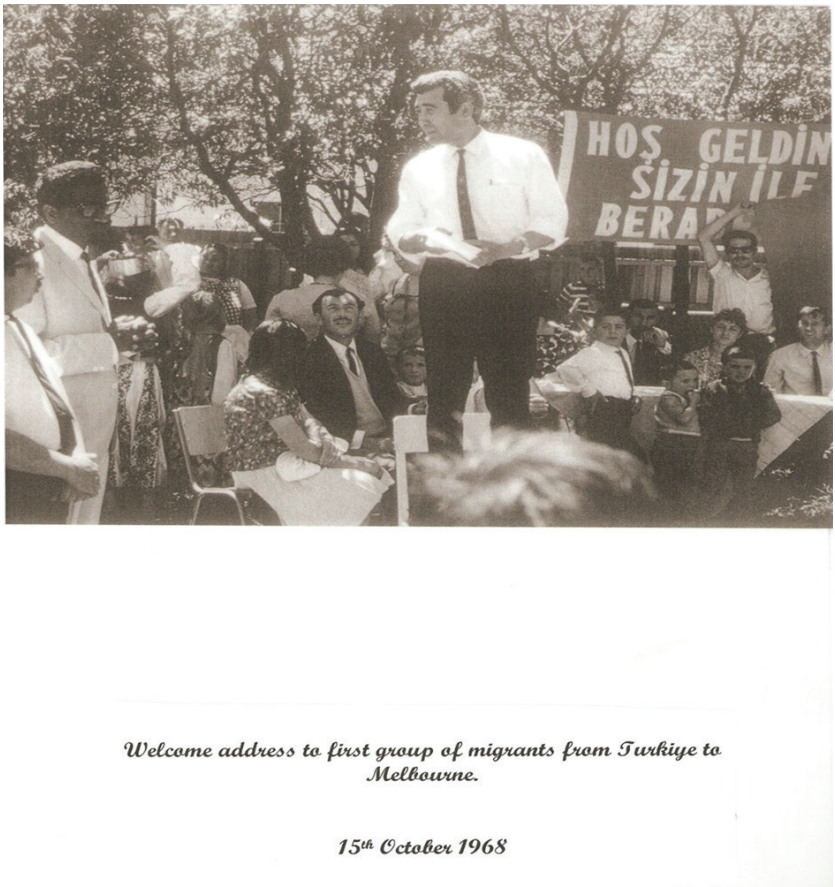
Ibrahim reassured the hesitant Turks by describing the fertile lands and job opportunities awaiting them in Australia and the chance to return to Türkiye if they wished. He patiently answered all their questions and succeeded in alleviating their fears about distant lands.

Australia's economy needed workers for its expanding manufacturing industries in Melbourne and Sydney, and the number of British immigrants declined. Unlike existing guest worker programs in Europe, the Australian program encouraged Turks to bring their families and settle permanently. It was hoped that spouses would also work in factories.

The first group of Turks arrived in Sydney on September 14, 1968. Ibrahim travelled 15 hours by car to Sydney to welcome them. He prepared a small

31 Ahmet İçduygu, Migrant as Transitional Category, Turkish Migrants in Melbourne, Australia, PhD Thesis, Australian National University, 1990, p 82.

welcome banner that read "Welcome" to attract the newcomers' attention, express his support, and convey that they had friends in Australia. When the Turks saw the banner at the airport terminal, they could not believe their eyes. Cypriot Turks from Sydney also came to welcome the new arrivals. The welcome hall resembled a riot of colours, filled with Cypriot Turks, Turkish flags, and banners.



1.8. Ibrahim Dellal welcoming the first Turkish group to Melbourne on October 15, 1968

North Cyprus Turkish Community welcoming the first Turkish group at Melbourne Airport[32]

32 Source SBS: https://www.sbs.com.au/language/turkish/en/article/Türkiye -australia-bilateral-agreement-50-years-on/qzgqrztpn

1.9. The Tears of Ottoman Uncle Mustafa

At the airport, Ibrahim encountered a blind man in a wheelchair waiting to welcome Turkish immigrants. Ibrahim remembered the following about him:

His name was Mustafa. I called him Uncle Mustafa. This was the first and last time I would meet this man. Uncle Mustafa was one of the Ottoman Turks who came with Afghan camel drivers. He was pleased to see more Turks coming to Australia. When the immigrants finally arrived, customs officers did not check their luggage due to the Turks' trustworthy reputation. Uncle Mustafa asked me, "Have they arrived?" I said, 'yes'. He bowed his head and began to cry. "I prayed for years. Thank God the Turks came to this country before I died."

I asked him what he prayed for. He gave me some advice and then said, "I used to live in Adelaide with other non-Turkish Muslims. There were about 3 to 4 of us. One day, we all prayed to Allah together. Crying, we said, 'Our Lord, please send Muslims here before we die.' In 1946, we were in a mosque with our other friends. We heard a few footsteps. The door opened, and four young men entered. The other men asked, 'Mustafa, have they finally arrived?' I said, 'Yes.' We couldn't hold back our tears when we saw the four young Muslims. We thanked Allah for accepting our prayer.

I made some tea and had breakfast with those young men. When I asked their names, they told me they were Hasan, Hüseyin, Ali, and Mehmet. We hadn't heard such names in a long time. They told us their stories. Two men were Bosnians, and the other two were from the Caucasus. They had lost their families in World War II and had been captured. After the war, they migrated to Australia.

These young men settled in Adelaide. They renovated the mosque, painted its walls, and cleaned the garden. The other elders and I gave these young men the mosque maintenance. We wanted to entrust the mosque and everything in it to them. At first, they didn't want to accept it out of humility, but they eventually did.

We told them, 'We have been praying for years for young men like you to come and take care of this mosque. Some of us never married, had no children, and died. Some of us had children, but they didn't take care of the mosque. We prayed to Allah not to take our lives until young Muslims came here. One of us saw in a dream that you came to this mosque. We have been waiting for your arrival for a long time. And now, look, Ibrahim, the Turks are coming. It is a blessing from Allah.'"[33]

33 For further detail see Salih Yucel, The Struggle of İbrahim: The Biography of an Australian

Ibrahim Dellal never saw Uncle Mustafa again. The migration of Turks to Australia in groups began in 1968 and continued until 1974. The first Turks who arrived faced great difficulties, primarily due to their lack of English.

One person recounts: "They took us from the airport to a hostel in Villawood. After staying there for three days, we found a small rental house in the Redfern district. They immediately placed me in a glass and bottle factory, and I started working there. I walked from home to the factory. For the first month, I worked from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. Later, my shift hours changed according to the rules. I started working from 3 p.m. to 11 p.m. On the first night, I left the factory at 11 p.m. It was dark outside. I thought I was going home, but this street was different. There was no one on the street. I kept walking, hoping to find the street leading to my house, but I couldn't find it. It was 2 a.m. I sat on a small stone on the street and started crying. I didn't know what to do. I didn't know the way, and I didn't know the language. Then I thought of something. I returned to the factory from where I had come. When the Turks working the night shift from 11 p.m. to 7 a.m. saw me, they asked why I hadn't gone home. I didn't let on. Then, I realised I had left the factory through the back door. This time, I left through the front door. I found the street where our house was and went home. The distance between the house and the factory was about a 20-25 minute walk. When I got home, I saw that my wife's eyes were red from crying. There was no phone at home at that time, and when my wife saw that I hadn't come home, she didn't know what to do and just sat and cried."

Another person recounts: "I was living in the Auburn district of Sydney. Once, I had to go to the city centre for work and take the train. On the way back, I got on the wrong train because I didn't know English. The train went to the last station but didn't pass through my district. At the last station, I retook the train and returned to the city centre. I got on another train, and it also went to the last station, but it didn't stop in our district. I went back and forth several times. It was already 10 p.m. I was very distressed. I didn't know what to do. I got on a train again. When the train stopped at the stations, I got off at each station and shouted, 'Is there anyone who speaks Turkish?' I got back on the train. After doing this two or three times, a police officer on duty at the train station at night noticed this and approached me. I didn't know the language, but I said I was Turkish. He found a Turkish translator via radio.

Müslim, Tugrah books, New Jersey, 2010.

Through the translator, I told the police I had gotten on the wrong train and lost my way. The police then put me on the right train, and I finally got home around midnight."

A lady recounts: "We were living in the Redfern district. My husband was working in a glass and bottle factory. I went to see him at work for something. But on the way back, I somehow got lost because I had walked there and was going to walk back home. I kept walking, but I couldn't find my district. Finally, I got tired and started crying. Then I went to a car repair shop there. I tried to explain my problem to the mechanic with hand gestures. I barely explained that my husband was working in the glass bottle factory. He found the factory's phone number. He called the factory and put me in touch with my husband. Because I didn't know the address of the house. I got the address from him. Then that person, a good man, wanted to take me home in his car. I got in the back seat of the car. The man brought me home. He even parked the car a little far away. He wanted to walk me to the door. I thought, 'What would the neighbours or Turks think if they saw me walking with a stranger?' So, the man walked in front, and I walked behind him. The man was puzzled, 'Why isn't this lady walking with me?' Finally, I got to the door and thanked him."

A Turkish man named Mustafa recounted his experience: "After coming to Australia, my father passed away in Türkiye after a certain period. I wanted to attend my father's funeral and went to Türkiye. Of course, I hadn't learned English yet. On the way back, I took a taxi to get home from the airport. I had lost or didn't have my house address with me. The taxi driver asked for the address. The only word I knew was the Auburn district in Sydney. The taxi driver brought me to that district at night, but I couldn't remember the street's name. The only thing I knew was that the exterior of my house was covered in green paint. I told the taxi driver 'green house,' and nothing else. The taxi driver drove around and eventually found the house. I wanted to pay the taxi driver. He thanked me and didn't take the money. The taxi driver later wrote this as a story and sold it to those who made comedy films, and it was shown on television as a short comedy film. The name of the comedy film was 'Green House.' Of course, when the Turks watched this, Mustafa's name was forgotten, and everyone started calling him 'Green House.'"

In an interview with SBS Radio, Gülizar Çetin said: "We bought sugar thinking it was salt, and flour thinking it was detergent. Another person said,

'We thought the train with the 'No Smoking' sign was going to Villawood.'"[34] The difficulties and stories the Turks faced due to their lack of knowledge could fill a book. I hope that a researcher will collect these and turn them into a book in the future.

1.14. Religion Left on the Other Side of the Ocean

When the migration agreement between Türkiye and Australia was signed, there was no provision for addressing religious needs. Some of the first Turkish immigrants would say among themselves, "Religion was left behind across the ocean in Türkiye." However, over time, they felt the need for religion. For instance, they had funerals and needed answers to questions like how to conduct the funeral, where to bury the deceased, and who would perform the burial. Among the immigrants were individuals who had studied Quran courses or had some religious knowledge but lacked pedagogical training. These individuals, especially in Sydney and Melbourne, began teaching children some short chapters of the Qur'an at home and later in rented spaces. They taught the Quran and made efforts to impart basic religious knowledge. In the early years, they had no idea where to perform Eid prayers; sometimes, they rented a hall, and other times, they performed the prayers in an empty factory hall. The Turks had migrated intending to stay for 3-5 years and then return. Therefore, both husband and wife worked to save money and return to Türkiye as soon as possible. However, over time, they realised this was not the case. Most of them did not return to Türkiye or could not return and settled in Australia. Sometimes, both parents would leave for work early in the morning. The children would wake up on their own, have breakfast, and go to public schools. A generation grew up unaware of many things.

1.15. Who Will Conduct the Funeral?

How would the religious needs of the Turks who migrated to Australia be met? Who would conduct their funerals, officiate their weddings, and provide basic religious education to their children? The Republic of Türkiye had no policy on this matter. According to the agreement between Australia and Türkiye, Turkish immigrants would be hosted in immigration centres

34 https://www.sbs.com.au/language/turkish/en/article/Türkiye -australia-bilateral-agreement-50-years-on/qzgqrztpn accessed 21.08.2024.

and assisted in finding jobs. Additionally, each immigrant would receive 25 Australian dollars.[35] Beyond this, there was nothing in the agreement. There was no provision for the social and religious needs of Turkish immigrants. At that time, it was unknown whether the Turkish Embassy, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and other officials had researched the challenges faced by first-time immigrants from different nations to Australia, how their problems were solved, or what other states had done. However, the agreement shows that no consideration was given to the social, cultural, linguistic, and religious problems of immigrants from Türkiye. Only upon the request of citizens abroad, imams were sent to Europe during Ramadan starting from 1971. According to Türkiye's Presidency of Religious Affairs, "Our Presidency began sending temporary religious officials abroad on Ramadan and Eid al-Adha from 1971. Later, clergies were selected by the Presidency of Religious Affairs and sent abroad as Social Assistants (Religious Officials) by the Ministry of Labor, and this practice continued until 1984."[36]

Even the Presidency of Religious Affairs only considered the religious needs of Turkish citizens who had gone to Europe in 1961, ten years later.[37] When political Islam, Sufi Orders, and faith-based movements began to engage in religious activities and gained some strength, the Presidency of Religious Affairs started efforts to send permanent clergies in 1979, during Fahri Korutürk's presidency, upon the proposal of a Mason senator. The aim was to limit the activities of political Islam, Sufi Orders, and faith-based movements among Turkish citizens. However, no such information is on the Presidency of Religious Affairs' website.

I could not identify the first imam among the Turks who came to Australia. However, the people I spoke to stated that in both Sydney and Melbourne, their deceased remained in morgues, and there were no imams to wash, shroud, and perform the funeral prayers. Some individuals who had studied at Quranic courses or had specific religious knowledge in Türkiye conducted these funerals. Additionally, some volunteers mobilised to teach children basic religious knowledge and short prayer verses at home. These

35 Ahmet İçduygu, Migrant As Transitional Category: Turkish İmmigrants, Melbourne Australia, PhD Thesis submitted to Australian National Unıversıty,1990, p 72.

36 Tanıtım, https://disiliskiler.diyanet.gov.tr/sayfa/53/tanitim

37 Tanıtım, https://disiliskiler.diyanet.gov.tr/sayfa/53/tanitim

volunteers made efforts to provide religious education to Turkish children. In Melbourne, some took their children to the mosque in Preston, the only mosque at the time. Over time, the Turks needed mosques and established Islamic societies. Additionally, some teachers started giving Turkish language lessons to children on weekends because the Turks did not want their children to forget Turkish.

1.16. The First Turkish Mosque in Melbourne

The Prophet Muhammad said, "Whoever builds a mosque for Allah, seeking His pleasure, Allah will build a house in Paradise for him."[38] When Muslims migrated from Mecca to Medina, they immediately established a mosque in the village of Quba near Medina, highlighting the importance of mosques in Muslim life.[39] Upon arriving in Medina, the Prophet Muhammad built the Prophet's Mosque before his own house, clearly demonstrating the mosque's vital significance for Muslims.

According to İbrahim Dellal (d. 2018), Turks initially attended the mosque in Preston. However, there were some issues between the Turks and Arabs there. For instance, some Arabs opposed the Turks' use of prayer beads, calling it an innovation. Differences in religious practices also caused problems. The uniform way Turks performed prayers contrasted with the varied practices of Arabs from different schools of law, which was unfamiliar to the Turks. Moreover, the Turks did not understand the sermons delivered in Arabic. Consequently, in 1971, the Turks established the Coburg Islamic Society.

About three years after the Turks' arrival, the Islamic society was founded, and the construction of a mosque began. In 1976, the new Fatih Mosque Complex (Coburg Islamic Centre) was built at 31 Nicholson Street, Coburg. This mosque became a source of hope for the Turks, who rejoiced at having their mosque. Quran lessons and youth programs began at the mosque, and Friday sermons and lectures were delivered in Turkish. However, issues arose regarding who would manage the mosque. Conflicts emerged among the congregation, particularly between supporters of the National Vision

38 Buhârî, Salât, 65.

39 Mustafa Asım Köksal, Islam Tarihi, https://archive.org/details/islam-tarihi-asim-koksal-tum/page/n835/mode/2up

movement, a political party, and those pro-government but not affiliated with any party. Later, internal divisions occurred within the National Vision Movement(Milli Görüş), partly due to followers of the late Esad Coşan Hoca Efendi, the spiritual leader of a Nakshi Sufi order, leading to further conflicts.

Consulate officials did not look favourably upon the National Vision movement and Naqshi Sheikh Esad Efendi's followers managing the mosque and conducting activities there. Esat (whose story will be told in the next chapter) recounted those days: "At that time, there was political Islamism in the mosque. They generally practised their religion by opposing others, forming an identity based on exclusion and hostility rather than reflection and investigation. I attended the mosque but kept my distance from them. When they had no enemies to oppose, they lost motivation. The compassion and love aspects of Islam that attract people to religion were missing. They did not have the perspective of loving the creation for the Creator's sake. The Muslim identity built on hostility did not last long. Some initially wanted to learn Arabic but gave up before completing it. My efforts were often ignored. They performed prayers outwardly, but there was no spirit in it. It became very artificial over time. I was saddened to see many friends like that. A religious attaché from Türkiye also came during those times. After a while, mosque elections were held. Although he was supposed to be unbiased, he sided with a faction of the congregation, causing further division. There were curses, fights, and even knife threats during the mosque management elections. I remember the police being called. I wondered why some Muslims behaved this way. Some young people who practised taekwondo and attended the mosque were also influenced and recruited by factions. While questioning their behaviour, I felt very lonely, as if I were searching for something. I wanted to contribute to society."

Every mosque has well-intentioned people managing it, but different methods can lead to problems. As Bediüzzaman Said Nursi said, "One should prefer the right over the righter, and the good over the better."[40] This means that if the best option cannot be agreed upon, the good one should be chosen. Serving religion in a place of conflict and noise is impossible; even if it is, it remains superficial. Islam means peace, and it thrives where there is peace. In an environment without peace, it is difficult for truth and justice to be heard.

40 Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, Hizmet Rehberi, Şerh eden, Abdullah Aymaz, Şahdamar Yayınları, İzmir, 2009, s.288

These disputes in the mosques had a negative impact, especially on the second generation. Young people did not want to go to places of conflict and noise. However, this situation had a positive outcome: the separated congregations established new mosques, increasing diversity.

1.18. The First Mosque in Sydney

The first mosque established in Sydney was the Erskineville Mosque. However, disagreements arose between two groups within the mosque, leading to a court case that cost the Turkish community thousands of dollars. The primary issue was over who would manage the mosque. The desire to lead, if not controlled, can lead to significant problems. Human history is replete with examples of the serious consequences of such disputes. A group that split from the Erskineville Mosque purchased an old church and established the Redfern Mosque. Unfortunately, the religious leaders, who were supposed to remain unbiased, failed to maintain their impartiality during this process.

Everyone goes to the mosque with good intentions. However, problems can arise over who will manage it. Differences in methods and personal egos can lead to issues. Serving religion in a place of conflict and noise is impossible; even if it is, it remains superficial. As mentioned earlier, Islam means peace and thrives where there is peace. In an environment without peace, it is difficult for the truth to be heard.

These disputes in the mosques had a negative impact, especially on the second generation. Young people did not want to go to places of conflict and noise. However, this situation had a positive outcome: the separated congregations established new mosques, increasing diversity.

In the next chapter, you will read about the first Hizmet Movement volunteers who came to Melbourne, their altruism, the challenges they faced, their tears, the blessings of Allah upon them, the dreams they had, and the spiritual atmosphere and tears shed during a camp with the late Mehmet Ali Şengül. You will also learn about establishing the first Hizmet educational institution in Australia.

CHAPTER TWO

THE FIRST HİZMET VOLUNTEERS IN MELBOURNE

In this chapter, I will focus on how and under what circumstances the Hizmet volunteers migrated to Australia. I will provide information about their social activities and challenges in their early years. I will also delve into their backgrounds and discuss the activities of those who came to Australia earlier and later became acquainted with Hizmet Movement.

In this chapter, you will also read the brief life stories of the first Hizmet volunteers who came to Australia and those who initially embraced Hizmet Movement. How did they come? What happened? What were their goals and dreams? As you read about their altruism and struggles, you will find yourself reminiscing, saying, "Those were the days." Their pains have turned into sweet memories.

In the Qur'an, it is said that whatever Allah does, He does with wisdom (Qur'an, 8:10). In a Hadith,"…Then the person who had the most miserable life in this world from among the people of Paradise will be brought, and he will be dipped once in Paradise. It will be said to him: 'O son of Adam, did you ever experience any misery? Did you ever suffer any hardship?' He will say: 'No, by Allah, O Lord! I never experienced any misery, and I never suffered any hardship."[41] This Hadith shows that the hardships endured in this world will be remembered as sweet memories in paradise. Even in this world, these memories become sweet stories when they are over.

You will also read about how they were often graced with Allah's help and how they overcame the difficulties and challenges they faced. Additionally, you will find it fascinating to read about their dreams and how they came true. In the interviews, they sometimes shed tears as they recounted their early days and years. Listening to them, I sometimes couldn't hold back my tears either. You will find their stories and life experiences fascinating and read them with curiosity.

2.1. The First Migrations to Australia and the First Hizmet Volunteers

Migration has been the destiny of all prophets, awliyas (saints), and great scholars. It is known that the Prophet and his companions also had to migrate from Mecca to Medina. After the death of our Prophet, approximately ninety per cent of the companions also left Mecca and Medina and migrated to different parts of the world. According to a narration from Jabir (may Allah be pleased with him), the Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) said:

41 Muslim, Book 55: The Book of Paradise, Hadith no: 2807.

"A prayer performed in the Sacred Mosque (in Mecca) is more virtuous than one hundred thousand prayers performed in any other mosque."[42] The Prophets says, "A prayer performed in this mosque of mine (in Medina) is better than a thousand prayers performed in any other mosque, except for the Sacred Mosque (in Mecca)."[43] Despite the virtues of Mecca and Medina, the companions left these blessed lands and migrated to different parts of the world to spread Islam. Everywhere the companions went and stayed was illuminated with the light of Islam. The graves of the companions are found in Africa, Asia, and Anatolia. The Quran states:

"Whoever migrates for the cause of Allah will find much refuge and abundance in the earth" (Surah An-Nisa, 100).

The great Quran commentator Fakhr al-Din al-Razi (d. 1210) interprets this verse as follows: "In conclusion, the verse seems to say: 'O human! You are afraid to leave your homeland because you fear the difficulties and hardships of the journey. Do not be afraid! Allah will grant you such great blessings and ranks when you migrate that this will disgrace your enemies and, at the same time, ease your livelihood.[44] In conclusion, the verse emphasises that any sincere effort made for the cause of Allah will not go unrewarded. The words of the Prophet (peace be upon him) also support this. Those who migrate for the cause of Allah join that luminosity of the people, including prophets, their companions and saints. When Prophet Muhammed (SAW) migrated to Medina, he made the following prayer:

"O Allah! Make us love Medina as much as You made us love Mecca, or even more."[45]

2.2. Migration: An Individual (fard ayn) or Collective Obligation (fard kifayah)

Fethullah Gülen Hoca Efendi, in one of his works, narrates, "The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him) visited Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas, who was suffering from a severe illness. Sa'd was saddened because he thought he would die in Mecca, as he had left it for the sake of Allah and migrated to Medina. He said to the

42 https://sunnah.com/ibnmajah:1406

43 Sahih al-Bukhari, The Virtue of Prayer in the Mosques of Mecca and Medina, 1:1190

44 Fakhraddin ar-Razi, Mafatih al-Gayb, https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=1&tTafsirNo=4&tSoraNo=4&tAyahNo=100&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1

45 Buhârî, Deavât, 43

Messenger of Allah, 'Will I be left behind from my companions?' The Prophet first mentioned that even if he stayed in Mecca, his rank would increase and his status would rise as long as he performed righteous deeds. Then he said he would live long and perform many beneficial deeds."[46] According to Gülen, "From the above hadith, we can first say that migration for the sake of exalting Allah's word and spreading the prophet's noble name is very important. During the time of the Prophet, it was obligatory for Muslims to migrate. Migration was almost considered a requirement of faith. In later periods, although migration ceased to be an individual obligation, it can be said that it retained its status as a collective obligation. Yes, the main issue is intention. As expressed in the prophetic saying that Bukhari included as the first hadith in his Sahih, ""The (reward of) deeds, depend upon the intentions and every person will get the reward according to what he has intended.."[47] Therefore, it is vital to set out with the intention of pleasing Allah when migrating and then crowning it with striving and representing the cause of Allah. Even if a person goes to a place with the intention of staying there and serving its people, they may need to act according to new circumstances that arise later."[48]

Fethullah Gülen Hoca Efendi would pray for friends who migrated abroad, saying, "May Allah make you love the place you go to," in light of the Prophet's prayer when he migrated to Medina. He would also advise those who went to make the following prayer: "O Allah, make the people of the place we go to love us, and make us love them." Because if you do not love them, you cannot serve them.

Imam Ghazali (d. 1111) did not write a specific chapter directly addressing the topic of migration; however, he touched upon various aspects of migration in his works and interpreted this concept as a fundamental element of Islamic life. Imam Ghazali considered migration as an essential step on the path to happiness. A person should migrate from the alluring traps of the world and the self to attain Allah's pleasure. He presented migration as necessary for a Muslim's spiritual and moral development. In his view, migration is not just a spatial change but also a spiritual purification and a journey towards Allah.

46 Muslim, https://sunnah.com/muslim:1628g

47 Bukhari, https://sunnah.com/bukhari:6689.

48 Fethullah Gülen,Hicret, https://fgulen.com/tr/eserleri/kirik-testi/hicret-kt

Imam Rabbani (d. 1624) stated that a believer's life is a continuous migration; they should always strive to turn towards Allah and seek His pleasure. Imam Rabbani emphasised that physical migration, or changing one's location, should be complemented by spiritual migration, or turning one's heart and soul towards Allah. Physical migration is only considered true migration when it is done for the sake of Allah and accompanied by a heartfelt turn towards Him. The person who migrates seeks refuge in Allah and enters His protection, thus reaching the level of piety. In his view, migration gains meaning through the heart and soul's turn towards Allah and abandoning worldly desires. He explained the importance of migration by stating that even the dog (Qitmir) of the Companions of the Cave was mentioned in the Quran because it migrated with those who migrated.

2.3. Fethullah Gülen Hoca Efendi's Views on Migration

Fethullah Gülen Hoca Efendi considers migration not just as a physical relocation but also as a spiritual elevation and a self-renewal process. For Gülen, migration is not merely a geographical move but also a spiritual journey within one's inner world, striving to be closer to Allah. According to him, migration is not just a change of location but also a change in the system of values. Through migration, a person undergoes a revolution in their spiritual world and strives to be closer to Allah. Gülen's words emphasise that migration is not just a phenomenon of the past but should also be a spiritual journey present in the life of every believer today. In his view, migration symbolises the effort to be closer to Allah and the sacrifices made in this pursuit.[49]

In his work "A Study of History," the renowned English historian Arnold Toynbee argues that migrations or the movement of people between regions have been significant catalysts in the rise and development of civilisations. He believes that the interaction between different cultures brought about by migrations often leads to the exchange of ideas, technology, and practices that contribute to the growth and development of civilisations.

Fethullah Gülen Hoca Efendi sees migration as an important tool for spreading the Islamic cause and making Allah's name known. Referring to the Prophet's hadith, "By Allah, this matter (i.e., Islam) will reach every place where the sun rises and sets. It will not leave a house of clay or hair except

49 Fethullah Gülen, Hicret, https://fgulen.com/tr/eserleri/kirik-testi/hicret-kt

that Allah will cause this religion to enter it, either with honour given to an honourable person or humiliation given to a humiliated person, an honour with which Allah honours Islam and a humiliation with which Allah humiliates disbelief."[50] Gülen points out the necessity for Muslims to migrate to different geographies and argues that this should continue today. This view is connected to a mission understanding that represents the universality of Islam.[51]

Historically, as long as Muslims kept migration alive, Islamic civilisation grew. When migrations ceased, decline began. This is also valid within the Hizmet Movement.

2.4. The First Migrant of Hizmet in Australia

Mus'ab was the first Hizmet-affiliated immigrant in Australia. According to Mus'ab's uncles and aunts, his paternal grandfather was a scholar in Konya three or four generations ago, originally from one of the Turkish tribes that came from Ahlat. While the nomads in Western Anatolia were called "Yörük," those east of the Sinop, Ankara, Konya, Alanya line were called "Türkmen." According to Mus'ab, one of the tribes that migrated to Anatolia with the Kayı Tribe was the Muhlisobasi Tribe, which established the Muhlisoba village upon arriving in Anatolia. Based on the information I received from Mus'ab, I conducted research. According to my research, Muhlisobasi Village is located in the Akdağmadeni district of Yozgat. There is also a village with the same name in Şereflikoçhisar. Historically, this region was also a region of Konya.[52]His maternal side is known for practising Muslims and generosity. Mus'ab, whose ancestors were migrants, was destined to migrate to other parts of the world, including Australia. According to Mus'ab, his migration to Australia is the fulfillment of his ancestors' prayers, and he also sees it as a blessing from Allah. Due to his upbringing, he was interested in religious and national matters from a young age.

During his youth, Mus'ab participated in the activities of the National Turkish Student Union (Milli Türk Talebe Birliği), which was not involved in terrorism. Through this organisation, he had the opportunity to meet many

50 Musnad Ahmad , Hadith No: No. 16998.

51 Fethullah Gülen, Hicret, https://fgulen.com/tr/eserleri/kirik-testi/hicret-kt

52 Dr Selman Uslu, İçanadolu Steplerinin Antropojen Karakteri Üzerine Araştırmalar, İstanbul Üniversitesi Orman Fakültesi Dergisi, Yıl 1958, s.152.

intellectuals of that time. The famous Islamic historian, the late Mustafa Asım Köksal, was one of them. He also attended the talks of Erdem Beyazıt and other academics whose names he could not remember. Mus'ab said, "I attended their talks and study circles. Many people smoked during the talks. When I asked Asım Köksal, 'What kind of study circle is this where people smoke?' he was surprised." Possibly, he considered smoking as normal.

However, he felt a sense of discomfort and dissatisfaction about their methodology of serving Islam. Their methods and the things they talked about did not satisfy him. Mus'ab's cousin, who was studying at Ankara Imam Hatip High School, had somehow become acquainted with Hizmet Movement. He introduced Mus'ab to the people of Hizmet affiliates. When he met them, Mus'ab was very happy and made this prayer that night: "O Allah, do not separate me from these people until I die." (Mus'ab's eyes filled with tears as he said this prayer during the interview) Meeting them was a turning point in his life and became his lifeline. Mus'ab said, "Even today, whenever I am in a difficult situation or feel stuck, I resort to that prayer."

Mus'ab said, "I was an enthusiastic and active young man in those years. I was attending Taekwondo courses. God forbid, I could have been misled because I greatly desired to do many things for the country and humanity. By the grace of Allah, I met Hizmet's affiliates and thank God I was not misled. Otherwise, I could have easily fallen into one of the wrong ideological movements of that time. Although I was studying at the Technical Arts High School, I chose the Ankara Faculty of Theology for the university exams. I even started preparatory classes there. In the same year, I also passed the Air Force Military Academy entrance exam. I went and had a meeting with Fethullah Gülen Hoca Efendi and sought his advice. To study at the Air Force Academy, I needed a medical report from the Air Force Hospital. Since childhood, I have occasionally had nosebleeds. I had surgery, but it did not go well. There was a hole in the nasal bone, which prevented me from becoming a pilot. Therefore, I could not get approval from the medical board and could not study at the Air Force Academy. Previously, I had taken the Military Naval High School exams and ranked 420th out of 10,000 candidates. At that time, there was a tradition in the Navy: you needed to have a relative in the Navy to be considered part of the naval family. Our family did not have such a tradition, so I could not enter the Naval High School either. All these could be reasons for my coming to Australia. It seems that it was destined for me to come to Australia."

2.5. Mus'ab's Migration to Australia

Mus'ab's older brother came to Australia in 1972. He got married and had children but later passed away in a traffic accident. Before his death, he repeatedly invited Mus'ab to Australia and strongly wished for him to study at a university in Melbourne. He told Mus'ab that Australia was a beautiful country with many opportunities. Initially, Mus'ab did not take this seriously. Mus'ab recounts:

"After the 1980 coup, my future wife came to Türkiye with her family for a holiday. My brother knew her family and suggested they visit us. By Allah's decree, this visit led to our marriage. My brother's persistent recommendations and the prospect of marriage created a strong pull, and I decided to migrate to Australia. At that time, I was staying in a dersane (student house) in Ankara with Naci Tosun, a senior Hizmet affiliate. As far as I remember, there were eight Hizmet dersanes in Ankara. I mentored high school students and young people who came to the dersane. When I mentioned the idea of going to Australia, they initially disapproved because Hizmet numbers in Ankara were already very few, and some activities needed to be done. But later, seeing my determination, they agreed. They said, 'Brother, it would be great if you stayed here. Since you are determined to go, may this be an opportunity for our activities to spread worldwide, and you can pave the way for friends who will come later.' Another reason for my decision to go to Australia was the ideological polarisation in Türkiye at that time. The killings of many young people in right-left conflicts were frightening. I had studied with Mehmet Ali Ağca in the same school, who attempted to assassinate the Pope, and İbrahim Çiftçi, a nationalist responsible for the deaths of many young people."

Mus'ab thinks destiny gradually prepared him for his journey to Australia. The main reason for his migration was his marriage to the woman he met. Historically, marriages with the local population have also contributed to the spread of Islam. Mus'ab's wife is Turkish but, in a sense, local because she grew up in Australia.

When Mus'ab arrived in Melbourne, he joined the Risale-i Nur group. However, in 1985, the group split due to reading the Sızıntı, a monthly Hizmet magazine and listening to Fethullah Gülen Hoca Efendi's tapes was not welcomed. Consequently, Mus'ab consulted with a few friends, sought permission from the group, and started holding spiritual study circles in their homes. These study circles later contributed to the upbringing of young people who would serve in the future.

Mus'ab emphasises the importance of supporting young people in his discussions. He stresses the need for the Turkish community to establish private schools. Years later, when Işık College was founded in Melbourne, he expressed happiness at seeing this vision become a reality.

2.6. Habib's Tears

Habib was born in Ankara in 1960. His father was from Trabzon, and his mother was from Sungurlu, Çorum, but they had lived in Ankara for a long time. Habib's father was a civil servant. In 1973, when Habib was 13, his family immigrated to Australia. His father was not religious and held leftist views, often reading leftist Akşam and Cumhuriyet newspapers. Habib grew up in such a family, reading books and writings of some leftist thinkers. He respected and admired the poet Nazım Hikmet, a famous leftist poet and read his poems. After 1968, most of the educated class held leftist views in Türkiye. These leftist individuals established the Turkish Cultural Association in Richmond in Melbourne. Habib's father took him there, and later, Habib was elected as a member of the association's disciplinary committee. At that time, most of the people around him were worldly and non-practising Muslims. There were hardly any religious people among the educated. However, those who came from various villages and districts of Anatolia had a cultural Islam.

Habib recalls: "In 1980, my mother went to Türkiye with my sister. One of my sisters got engaged to Mus'ab. When Mus'ab first came to Australia in 1982, he stayed with us until he married and rented a house. Naturally, I saw and talked to my brother-in-law Mus'ab every day. I noticed that he had a different lifestyle and prayed. The things he talked about were very interesting to me, as if they were what I had been looking for. Initially, I saw myself as knowledgeable and superior, and I saw him as ignorant because that was the general view of leftists towards religious people at that time. As I continued talking to Mus'ab, I realised that he was not ignorant at all but a very knowledgeable person. He talked about topics I had never heard of but was curious about, and they caught my interest. Over time, his words and demeanour influenced me. He sometimes went to discussions and once invited me. I joined the discussion not to disappoint him."

Habib continues: "I remember the first Risale-i Nur study circle I attended. There were about 10-15 people. On the table were the books of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi. They read these books and expressed their opinions. Seeing myself as very knowledgeable, I frequently asked them questions. They patiently and

convincingly answered my questions. As far as I remember, my questions were about destiny and the representation or misrepresentation of religion. After learning about my religion, I realised that the questions I asked them were very simple, but I did not know that at the time. The study circle continued until morning. They performed the morning prayer. As far as I remember, I did not pray, but I cried while they were praying. After that cry, I felt like a different person. I intended to pray and started learning how to perform the prayer. I wrote the short chapters(surahs) of the Qur'an on paper and hung them on the wall facing the qibla. I began praying by reading those surahs from the wall. However, I cried uncontrollably every time I prayed. I could not hold back my tears. I also tried to attend the Risale-I Nur study circle as much as possible." Habib's tears softened his heart and would serve as a catalyst for raising a golden generation in the future. A hadith states that a drop of tear shed out of fear of Allah is equal to a drop of martyr's blood.

Abu Umamah Suday ibn Ajlan al-Bahili (r.a) reported that the Prophet said:

"Nothing is more beloved to Allah than two drops and two marks: a drop of tear shed out of fear of Allah and a drop of blood shed in the way of Allah. The two marks are a mark received in the way of Allah and a mark left while performing one of the obligatory acts of worship."[53] One of the seven people whom Allah will shade on the Day when there is no shade but His is a person who remembers Allah in solitude and his eyes become tearful.[54]

Imam Ghazali said, "Tears are an outward expression of a servant's deep fear and love for Allah. These tears are among the most accepted prayers in the sight of Allah."[55]Imam Rabbani described tears as an outward manifestation of the spiritual fire in a person's heart, that is, the love of Allah. This is seen as a sign of an inner burning, a heart filled with divine love.[56]

Said Nursi said, "Tears show the tenderness and sensitivity of the heart. The tenderness of the heart allows the truths of faith to be more deeply and

53 Tirmidhî, Fadâilü'l-Jihâd 26.

54 Bukhari and Muslim, https://sunnah.com/riyadussalihin:449.

55 İhyâ-u Ulûmi'd-Dîn, Cilt 4, Kitâbu'l-Havf ve'r-Reca (Korku ve Ümit Kitabı)

56 İmam Rabbani, Mektûbât, Cilt 1, Mektup 34.

effectively understood."[57] In this statement, he indicates that tears are a sign of the heart's sensitivity, which helps to understand the truths of faith more deeply.

Gülen, "Tears are an outward expression of a person's inner world and a sign of deep devotion to Allah."[58] He continues, "Tears are a call from the depths of a person's soul, and this call is an expression of love and devotion to Allah."[59]

Habib's tears were the result of a search, spiritual emptiness and suffering. Those tears would open the doors to truth for him and lead him to what he hoped for. One of the Hizmet affiliates who came to Australia would often shed tears. He said, "If I could, I would wet every inch of Australia's soil with my tears. Perhaps my tears will attract mercy and help people find the truth." The foundations of every institution established through their efforts will also be laid with tears as much as with mortar. You will read about this in the following pages.

2.7. Esat's Destiny

Esat migrated to Australia with his family in 1976, in his first year of high school. At that time, almost all Turks thought, "We will stay in Australia for 3-5 years, save some money, and return to our homeland." Therefore, husbands and wives worked day and night, and some even worked on weekends. As a result, they could not spend time with their children or focus on their education. They did not seriously consider their children's future or education. The children growing up in those days became victims of this mindset.

Since everyone worked so much, children hardly saw their parents. When the children reached working age, around 15-16, they also started working. Esat grew up in such a community. However, Esat had a different side. While continuing his education, he played football, which was very popular in Türkiye. He quickly became successful and started playing in the Star League. In short, within 1-2 years, he had made significant progress in football. The Turkish community appreciated his achievements; almost everyone had heard

57 Said Nursi, 14. Mektup.

58 M. Fethullah Gülen, Pearls of Wisdom, Tughra Books, 2007, p. 88.

59 M. Fethullah Gülen, Toward Global Civilization Love Tolerance, Tughra Books, 2010, p. 16

of him. Families would come to watch his matches as if they were going on a picnic. Esat initially played for a non-Turkish team. Later, some members of the Turkish community convinced his father, and Esat started playing for the Moon Star team. Unfortunately, that year, his team was relegated. He then began playing for Anadolu Spor.

2.8. The Tragic Accident that Led Esat to Practise His Faith

"...But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not" (Qur"an, 2: 216).

If people can look at events and experiences with an enlightened perspective, they will witness that many difficulties, troubles, and illnesses ultimately lead to good. Accidents and calamities are like that too. According to Fakhr al-Din al-Razi, many things the self dislikes result in good consequences.[60] Bediüzzaman said, "Even in the ugliest things, there is a true aspect of beauty. Yes, everything in the universe; every event is beautiful in itself or its results. Some events appear ugly and chaotic on the surface, but beneath that surface lies a very bright beauty."[61] We see this in the outcome of the accident Esat experienced.

Esat recalls: "I was a typical Muslim in terms of lifestyle. Our family was the same. We attended Friday prayers and fasted during Ramadan. Unfortunately, we were not conscious Muslims at that time. The Turkish community was generally like this. Then, I faced a painful event.

It was 1980. The coach of the team I played for had a circumcision ceremony for his children. I was helping him prepare the hall for the ceremony. While trying to hang balloons on the lights, I fell. It was as if I had fallen from a great height, and my neck was almost broken. In such cases, brain haemorrhage or paralysis could occur. I was in intensive care for three days and then I was bedridden for six weeks. I could hardly move. While I had an active life as an athlete, I was now completely bedridden due to this fall. During that time, I also questioned myself and about the purpose of life. When the doctors came, they said, 'There is nothing to be done. Your treatment has to be like this.' They

60 Fahreddin Razi, Tefsiri Kebir, https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=1&tTafsirNo=4&tSoraNo=2&tAyahNo=216&tDisplay=yes&Page=2&Size=1&LanguageId=1

61 Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, Sözler, s. 210.

meant I had to stay in bed. Over time, I accepted and gradually got used to it because I had no choice. Time was passing slowly. I couldn't even turn my head from side to side. I remember they placed an old truck mirror in front of me. I used that mirror to see outside the window and watch people passing by. They also brought me books to keep me from getting bored. There is a reason I am telling you about this illness. It was as if Allah was preparing me for something. Overcoming this illness required a long and challenging process."

There was only one Turkish mosque in the Coburg district of Melbourne where the Turks lived. Someone who knew Esat visited another person in the hospital and, upon hearing that Esat was in the hospital, also visited him. Esat saw two books in the hands of his visitor. The visitor left the books for Esat to read. One was Necip Fazıl's "Çöle İnen Nur (The Light Descending on the Desert)," and the other was Hekimoğlu İsmail's "Minyeli Abdullah." These books were like spiritual medicine for Esat, and he read them in two days. Later, he got hold of Şule Yüksel Şenler's " Huzur Sokağı (Peace Street)" and read it as well.

Esat remembers: "After reading these books, I decided never to miss Friday prayers. I will always perform my five daily obligatory prayers. I will do everything I can to practise my faith. It turns out that this illness was a blessing from Allah for me. After leaving the hospital, the pain in my neck continued. Even after being discharged, I had to wear something around my neck to help it heal. The accident became a turning point in my life. I wanted to practise my faith consciously from then on. But how? There were no very knowledgeable and true Muslims whom I knew at that time. I didn't know any chapter of the Qur'an that I could recite for prayer, so I wrote them on paper, placed them in front of me, and prayed by reading them. The hospital process gave me a life purpose. Before that, I had no goal other than being an athlete." Six weeks later, when he left the hospital, it was as if Esat had become a new person. The illness had been a guide for him. As Bediüzzaman said, "Illness suddenly opens your eyes. It says to your body and soul: 'You are not immortal, you are not free, you have a duty. Leave pride, think of your Creator, know that you will go to the grave, and prepare accordingly.' Illness is an unfailing advisor and a warning guide from this perspective."[62]

For Bediüzzaman, "whoever endures patience and gratitude for illness and calamities becomes spiritually part of the luminous caravan of prophets,

62 Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, Lemalar, Şahdamar Yayınları, İstanbul, 2007, s 254.

saints, and perfect believers who endure calamities and illnesses with patience."[63] This can be said for Esat as well.

2.9. A Muslim Should Be the Giving Hand

Even back then, Esat desired for Muslims to be the giving hand.[64] This sentiment would endear him to the Hizmet Movement, as he would always give once he became a volunteer. He started university without anyone to help him. Later, he attended a translation course and earned a certificate. In subsequent years, he graduated from university and became a computer engineer. At that time, almost no one in the Turkish community was attending university. He knew only one or two people. While studying at university, Esat read whatever he could find related to Islam to increase his religious knowledge. As a symbol of his piety, he grew a beard. Some even mocked him, saying, "You've become an imam" because of his beard. While trying to live his faith, he faced social pressure, as his environment did not approve of his deep religious commitment.

Esat began to attend the mosque more frequently, even for morning and night prayers.[65] At that time, he had no friend to mentor him. He felt like someone who had fallen into the ocean. Esat said, "At that time, there was a strong influence of political Islamism in the mosque. The prevailing attitude often emphasised defining religious identity in contrast to others, which sometimes fostered a sense of opposition rather than introspection. Instead of focusing on contemplation and personal reflection, there was a tendency to frame religious practice around reactionary opposition to perceived adversaries. This mindset often shaped the tone of discussions and interactions within the community." Esat went to the mosque but kept a distance from them. He did not see any affection among them. They did not have the perspective of loving the created for the sake of the Creator. The identity of a Muslim built on reaction did not last long. For example, some of them initially wanted to learn

63 Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, Gleams, trans by Huseyin Akarsu, Istanbul, Tughrah Books, 2008, p 301

64 In hadith, "The upper hand is better than the lower hand. The upper hand is that of the giver and the lower (hand) is that of the beggar." Bukhari

65 The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) said:
"Whoever performs the 'Isha (night) prayer in congregation, it is as if they have spent half the night in prayer. And whoever performs the Fajr (dawn) prayer in congregation, it is as if they have spent the entire night in prayer."(Sahih Muslim, Book of Mosques, Hadith 260)

Arabic but later gave up without completing it. When I tried to do something, it was ignored. In short, they were praying outwardly, but there was no spirit in it. He felt they could not find the spiritual horizon of prayer.

Once, after praying the evening prayer at Coburg Mosque, some people took him to a mosque in Maidstone, which had been converted from a church. In a classroom at the back of the mosque, a Risale-Nur lesson was being held. Esat had previously heard of the Nurcu group, which follows Bediüzzaman Said Nursi's pathway, and had an antipathy towards them. However, a new spiritual journey awaited him.

Esat said, "Habib Bey and others frequently attended the study circle. We organised gatherings that everyone participated in. Some young people who grew up here also attended. Additionally, a newly converted Muslim named Muhammad also joined. Later, Muhammad's Chinese Malaysian wife also converted to Islam. Muhammad gave a very valuable gold ring as a donation, and this ring was sent to Türkiye. In a fundraising (himmet) meeting, Hoca Efendi mentioned that the ring came from Australia. At that time, the Risales had not yet been translated into English, but a few small pieces and Words had been translated. While Muhammad was reading these translations, I was conducting the lesson in Turkish, and he was following the English text."

Esat said, "For example, during a period we called the '93 syndrome,' we experienced some difficulties and disunity in the Hizmet Movement in Melbourne. You sincerely want to do something with sincerity, but some obstacles arise. During those years, Mus'ab planned to go to Türkiye for a vacation, but we thought he would not return. At that time, everything was left to me. There was a shop in Richmond, and he had given us the back of it. We turned the back into a nice study room. We organised various activities for young people there."

2.10. Coffee Shop Talks

Mus'ab described how difficult it was to engage with young people during those years: "At that time, almost no one was taking care of the youth. Many of our young people lost their lives due to drugs. Following Fethullah Gülen's example, I started going to Turkish coffee shops to give short talks about Islam and the importance of education. Once, the coffee shop owner tried to stop me, saying, 'What are you doing? People want to play cards and drink tea, and you distract them!' Someone stood up and said, 'Let this young man speak!'

The coffee shop owner replied, 'Okay, brother,' and couldn't say anything to him. I noticed that the person looked like a tough guy. He loudly said, 'Tea for everyone on me.' Then we got to know each other. His name was Fahri, and he was a professional gambler. He came and sat next to me. It was hot in the summer, and he was sweating. It turned out that everyone in the coffee shop knew him. Fahri told me, 'You continue enlightening these people about the youth.' Later, I learned that one of his children had also died from drugs. That day, I talked about how we should care for the youth. 'Your children are small today, but they will grow up tomorrow. Moreover, the young Greeks, Albanians, and Italians who came to Australia before the Turks fell into the unwanted ways of using intoxicants. If we do not take care of our youth, the same fate awaits them,' I said. Sometimes, Esat and Mus'ab would invite police officers from the narcotics department to give seminars to young people about the dangers of drugs and ways to protect themselves. Because we lost many Turkish youths to overdoses during those years."

Mus'ab continued his coffee shop talks. Once, while talking in a coffee shop in Fitzroy, he mentioned that our community should open private schools. It turned out that the Turkish Teachers Association was on the upper floor of the same building. The president of that association, a teacher named Metin, was in the coffee shop at that time. He told Mus'ab, 'Hey young man, take it easy. When we first came, we were flying high like you. But now, with the money given by the Australian government, we can only teach Turkish to our children on weekends. We can't do anything else because there are no resources. What you are talking about are empty dreams and fantasies. Don't waste our time with them. They are all empty words and impossible things.' Mus'ab replied, 'With Allah's grace, the day will come when we establish our schools here.'

Mus'ab emphasised the importance of taking care of the youth in his talks. He stressed that the Turkish community should establish private schools. Years later, when Işık College was established in Melbourne, he expressed happiness that this vision had become a reality.

Mus'ab recounted: "Years later, Işık College was established. They invited me to speak at the year-end ceremony. In my speech, I mentioned what that teacher had told me in the coffee shop a few years ago. He had said, 'What you are talking about is a dream,' but today, with Allah's grace and mercy, it has become a reality. At that moment, someone in the audience raised their

hand. I said, 'Go ahead.' He reminded me he was that teacher and recalled our conversation in the coffee shop years ago. He said**,** 'I will not step on your dreams this time. After seeing this school, I believe you will also establish a university.'"

2.11. Serving the Community Through Newspapers

Mus'ab recounted that during those years, the chief physician of a local health centre in their neighbourhood, a Jewish doctor, was publishing a local newspaper. Mus'ab met him by coincidence and asked, 'Can I write Turkish articles in your newspaper?' He agreed. The newspaper was distributed for free in some neighbourhoods. In both his coffee shop talks and the Turkish articles he wrote for this local newspaper, he emphasised the importance of taking care of the youth. If we do not take care of our children, some will fall into the trap of drug dealers and some will become alcoholics. Therefore, they will be harmful to society. He explained and wrote about the importance of parents taking care of their children and educating them. In his conversations, Mus'ab said, 'If we do not give them a good education, if we do not raise our children properly, if we do not mould them with our culture and faith, they will marry others tomorrow and forget their culture, religion, and family values.' Even then, he drew the community's attention to establishing dormitories and private schools for our children. Some listened, while others did not.

Esat said, "Mus'ab Bey and I prepared a page in Turkish for this local newspaper published in the region. Since we did not know journalism, both Mus'ab Bey and I struggled with what to do. This newspaper was distributed for free in the neighbourhood where Turks lived. We would paste the news or Turkish articles on a page at that time. It would go to print in that form."

Mus'ab remembered: 'There is something else I cannot forget from those years. Sometimes, we would go to different regions for spiritual talks. We would sit and talk with 3-5 people under a tree or in a park. Sometimes, it would suddenly rain, and we would run to the minibus to continue our talks there. Because if a few new people from that region joined us, we also wanted them to benefit. During those years, we would gather the youth, have picnics, play ball, or take them to camps.

The Dandenong spiritual study circle started with 3-5 people in homes. Later, we continued the lessons in a classroom at the Bosnians' mosque in Noble Park. That mosque had many empty classrooms. We only used one of

the classrooms. Over time, the number of participants in this conversation increased. Eventually, we felt the need to establish an official institution.' Esat attended those study circles and said, 'We started with a few people, and then the Dandenong study group grew. The people who attended those seminars later supported the Hizmet Movement and helped to establish the Keysborough campus of Işık College over time.'"

2.12. Aydın Hoca: Consultation Brings No Regret

It is said that good deeds often face many obstacles. Those who do good must contend with devils and devilish people. When Mus'ab, Habip, and Esat became active in the community, some people complained to the Turkish consulate, indicating that they were fundamentalists(dinci). Consul General Fahir Armaoğlu invited Mus'ab and his friends to the consulate to get to know them and learn who they were. Mus'ab recalled that day: "The three of us visited the consul general. When we arrived, he repeatedly asked, 'Are you those people?' We said yes. Apparently, he was expecting bearded, robed, and turbaned individuals, as such attire was seen as a sign of backwardness at the time in Türkiye. We had gone in suits and ties. I then explained our activities to the Consul General and mentioned that we wanted to establish a new association called Nesli Cedid (The New Generation). I expressed that our goal is to raise morally beautiful young people and Türkiye-respecting youth. I told him that through this association, we would send our youth to Türkiye for education. I also presented the constitution of our proposed association. He said, 'Few people will understand this name. Only people of my generation will understand Nesli Cedid; the youth growing up here will not. Authorities in this country might become suspicious of you. If you name your organisation with this name, the authorities here might associate you with the Palestine Liberation Organization. You could be suspected of raising terrorists. You live in this country as a citizen, but you want to raise youth who respect and are loyal to Türkiye. This idea will not please the authorities here.'

Then he turned to me and said, 'Aydın Hoca, you can carry out your activities under the name of a club. This is a popular name. There are clubs everywhere in this country, so you will be tolerated and not viewed with suspicion. The authorities will appreciate and support your efforts to protect the youth from bad habits. This will be popular, and you will receive financial support from the state. Therefore, this constitution is not suitable for the

conditions of this country. Prepare a new constitution and state that you will conduct club activities.'

Mus'ab and his friends considered and consulted on the consul general's proposal. The Hadith says, '...Consultation brings no regret...'[66] They concluded that his suggestions were more suitable for the conditions of this country. Mus'ab said, 'Fahir Armaoğlu was worldly and very secular, but his advice was very reasonable. Because a worldly person tells you principles that are truly suitable for the conditions of this country. I believe this was a blessing from Allah for us.' Later, we maintained good relations with the consul general. He liked me. He invited me to the Republic Day celebrations every year. When he invited me, he would tell the consulate staff, 'Aydın Hoca does not drink alcohol; give him orange juice.' Our nickname remained Aydın Hoca with him."

Mus'ab and his friends established an official association named "New Generation Youth Club." They invited government officials, local police authorities, the consul general, and the public to their new program. They held an opening ceremony to introduce their newly established association. In the speeches, they stated their goals and the activities they wanted to carry out. Both Turkish and non-Turkish Australian officials who attended liked this program and the speeches. It differed from other Turkish associations established until then, focusing more on social and cultural purposes than politics.

Mus'ab and his friends focused more on engaging with the youth in the Richmond area. Later, they learned that drug dealers also used this area to exploit young people. It was a heroin hub. They brought drugs from different parts of the world and sold them using the local youth, or the youth used these drugs. As a result, the youth became a major problem, involved in mischief, theft, corruption, and many other bad things. Of course, this was also a problem for the state. Both the police and various official and unofficial organisations were working hard to solve these problems.

Mus'ab recalled those days: "At that time, youth clubs were common in Australia. In a youth club established in the Richmond area, there was a person named Ross Wilson. When he heard about our activities with the youth, he helped us a lot. As far as I remember, we even included him in our board of

66 Ahmed b. Hanbal, Musnad,1/447; Tabaranî, Al-Kabir, 8/439

directors. He was already trying to do something to protect Turkish youth from bad habits with financial support from the government. In short, we were doing what he wanted to do but couldn't. That's why Mr. Wilson liked us very much. He once said, 'I tried hard but couldn't be useful to Turkish youth. You are doing this very well. This is exactly what I wanted to do.' We told him, 'The culture, religion, and social structure of Turkish youth are different; that's why you couldn't help them as you wanted.' Months later, a seminar was organised to inform families. Government officials also supported this seminar. They asked me to come and give a speech. Their goal was to inform families about the dangers their children faced. I went there and gave a speech on this topic."

Opening of the New Generation Youth Club

2.13. The First Camps for Youth

When Faruk was in high school and after graduation, he was an energetic young man. On one hand, he was boxing, and on the other, he was participating in the activities of Mus'ab and his friends. Faruk recalls those days: "Mus'ab and his friends had established a youth association called New Generation. They used to take the youth to camps. At these camps, spiritual lessons were held, and various sports activities took place. Yes, the Hizmet started like that in the early years. Later, one of the apartments in Richmond was used as a study centre. Mus'ab, Habib, Ensar, Esat, Mahmut, and Levent attended those initial spiritual study circles (sohbets). There were others too, but I can't remember them now."

The spiritual, social and cultural activities of the New Generation Youth Club with the youth and the increasing number of young people they engaged with positively impacted both government officials and local organisations. Their activities led the municipality and some civil organisations to support them. For example, they provided a field for sports and football. They also allocated rooms or small halls in certain places for meetings with the youth, thus protecting them from bad habits. In 1984, Mus'ab and his friends organised their first camp with 17 young people. Seeing the relative impact of this camp, they continued these camp programs in the following years. Mus'ab took on the role of cook and cleaner at the camp, inspired by Fethullah Gülen Hoca Efendi, and conducted religious, cultural, and social conversations with the youth. He taught them the Quran and gave them religious lessons. Naturally, the camp's unique spiritual atmosphere prevailed, and the youth strengthened their spirituality while camping. They performed the five daily prayers in the congregation and woke up for the night(tahajjud) prayer. Their behaviour was well-received by both their families and the local authorities.

Esat shared his thoughts on the first camps: "While camping with these young people, there were sometimes falls during activities. Despite all this, I believe that Allah protected us and these young people under those conditions. Through these camps, the youth began to love us, and we began to love them more. We built very good relations with them, so to speak. Looking back, what we did back then seems like madness with today's mindset. We were doing it without knowing the standard procedures and rules. We would have been responsible if anything had happened to those young people. But Allah protected us, and nothing dangerous happened. We used to let the youth

ride horses at the camp. The horses were supposedly trained. Sometimes, we couldn't control the horses we rode. We liked riding horses like the actors we saw in movies. Once, a horse sped up, and I held onto its main so tightly that it sped up even more. Then it stopped by a bush. We should have been careful while organising such programs but didn't know the rules. We organised these activities to find common ground with the youth and make them love us. We held these camps almost every year in the eighties."

According to Esat, the youth taken to the camp had not previously undergone a serious religious program. Esat likened what they did to casting yeast into a lake. Due to a lack of resources, they utilised some of the municipality's facilities. According to Faruk, the activities carried out at that time showed their impact over time.

Mus'ab reflects: "Now, looking back, most of the young people who participated in those camp programs have jobs, families, contribute to society, do useful work, and stay away from bad habits. The seeds sown back then did not go to waste. Among those young people, many have grown into individuals who contribute significantly to society today. Those youth activities were very fruitful; other young people also adjusted themselves by taking them as role models, even if only two or three dozen. I praise and thank Allah greatly."

During those years, there were also some activities at the Coburg Mosque. However, there were significant internal conflicts. Different groups were at odds with each other. Mus'ab recalls, "I used to go to the mosque sometimes to perform Friday prayer and sometimes to reach out to the youth. Some people, especially those with political views, did not like my presence there. I won't name names, but once, a religious leader called me and threatened me. He said, 'I don't want to see you in this mosque anymore.' He told me, 'You are confusing the youth. You are disturbing the harmony between youth in the mosque. You are interested in Freemasons. You are being hypocritical. There is no place for hypocrites among us.' I replied, 'In a Hadith, it is said that if you accuse someone of disbelief and they are not disbelievers, you become disbelievers. Or if you call someone a hypocrite and they are not, you become a hypocrite. If teaching Islam correctly to the youth is the issue, I am ready to give my life for it.'"[67]

67 A similar idea is referred to in the report narrated by al-Bukhaari (6104) and Muslim (60) from Ibn 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him), who said: The Messenger of Allah (blessings and peace of Allah be upon him) said: "Any man who says to his brother, 'O disbeliever,' it will

Despite their obstacles and threats, Mus'ab, Esat, and Habip continued their efforts. They had a goal and a dream: to keep the youth away from evil and strive to make them good Muslims and good citizens for the sake of Allah. Some people in the community gossiped about them, but they did not pay attention to such things and tried to do what needed to be done.

Mus'ab recounts: "I realised that my presence in the mosque was causing tension and disturbing some people. After that, I rarely went to the mosque, maybe only for Friday prayer. During those years, some people advised the community and the youth not to become Australian citizens. I, on the other hand, encouraged and advised the youth and our community to become Australian citizens. Those people accused me of trying to turn the community into 'George,' meaning trying to make them abandon their religion and Turkish identity. But I didn't care about their accusations. They thought they would stay for a certain period and then return. They thought we would work for a few years, return, and not lose our children. They even withdrew their children from high school in order to work and make money. They planned to save money, return, and build a house or a unit in Türkiye. They made their children work to earn money but did not send them to university. But it never happened as they thought. Most of them did not return or could not return to Türkiye.

At that time, I looked at the situation of the Italians and Greeks who had come earlier and saw that almost none of them had returned to their countries. This is a sociological fact. It would be valid for our community as well, and it was. I encouraged the youth to study and go to universities. Some people did not welcome this. They thought that if our youth studied, they would lose their religion and nationality. Yes, there were such concerns, but not educating them was not the solution. Some did not take our advice seriously because their children were still in primary school. They thought they would return in a few years anyway.

Most young people who attended those spiritual study circles later achieved great things. Some became bureaucrats. Some entered politics; two of those who participated at those study circles became members of the state parliament. Some became principals in Islamic schools. Some, like Faruk, became academics. One of those who attended those study circles is now a manager at the airport. Back then, they were probably between 15 and 20 years

apply to one of them. It is as he said. Otherwise, it will come back to him.

old, but they matured and tried to be helpful to people over time. In short, many of those who attended those study circles became truly beneficial to society, their families, and Islam and achieved good positions. One of them is now working as a pilot. When I think about those days, maybe those young people were not listening to us with full attention. But the activities done for Allah's sake did not go to waste. When I think about it, the stones of destiny have fallen into place. Our friends were just a means. In short, I understood that things done for Allah's sake never go to waste. When the time and duration come, Allah makes it happen.

There was an Alawy boy. I think his name was Hasan. He was a bit overweight. One day, I took him with a few young people to the seaside after a picnic and brought them back late. We used to live in the same apartment building. One day, he asked me, 'Why do you care so much about me? You have two small children. But you always help me. You take me to picnics and the seaside. My parents are alive, but they never did this for me, but you do,' and he cried. We explained our cause and ideals of caring for children and youth. Yes, it was like that back then. Sometimes, we neglected our children and took care of other people's children. It wasn't just me; other Hizmet affiliates were like that too.

I did everything myself when we took these children to picnics or camps. I cooked their meals, led their prayers, washed the dishes, and did the cleaning. In short, I did all their work. Naturally, this behaviour had a very positive impact on them. It seems that destiny was preparing those people for the future in that environment, even though we were nothing, and laying the stones of destiny."

2.14. Where is the Bearded and Robed Hoca?

During those years, Mus'ab was giving talks in various places. Once, someone came and asked, "Where is the hoca who gives inspirational talks?" because someone had recommended him, saying, "There is a hoca who gives excellent talks and has great religious knowledge." The person expected a hoca with a turban, robe, and beard. Upon arrival, his first question was, "Where is the hoca?" Mus'ab replied, "It is me." The person then said, "We came thinking you were the hoca, but you are not, are you?" because Mus'ab did not have a beard, turban and robe. At that time, if you were a hoca, you were expected to have a beard, turban, and robe. The man was surprised not to see these.

2.15. Crying Muhammad

Esat recalls: "While the Turkish version of the Risale-i Nur was being studied, someone translated it for Australian Muhammad, who had converted to Islam. Once, I saw Muhammad deeply moved and crying. He was upset that these books were not available in English. His parents and wife were not Muslim. He had placed a few books about Islam around the house, hoping they might read them and convert. As Muhammad learned more about Islam, he discovered that using gold was forbidden for men. He donated his valuable gold bracelet (and possibly other gold rings and jewellery, though I can't remember exactly). I believe Mehmet Ali Şengül took this ring to Türkiye. Hoca Efendi mentioned this ring in donation meetings, which was placed in the museum where he resides.

After I had gone to Türkiye, there was a disconnect between Muhammad and my friends in Melbourne, and we lost contact with him. His wife had misconceptions about Islam's views on women, which prevented her from converting. Muhammad was also learning the Quran. After I returned from Türkiye, I searched for Muhammad but couldn't find him. I only saw a booklet about how Rabia converted to Islam. I also searched for him on Facebook later but couldn't reach him."

2.16. The First Darül Erkam

Esat describes Hizmet affiliates' altruism during those days: "Towards the late eighties, an affiliate went to Türkiye and stayed there for a long time. He gave us the key to his house for meetings and gatherings, and we used it as a dersane for a while. We organised spiritual study circles and board meetings there. We named it 'Darül Erkam' because the first house where the Prophet Muhammad and his companions gathered in Mecca was called Darül Erkam."

Darül Erkam was a significant centre in the early years of Islam in Mecca, where Muslims gathered and received education. This house, belonging to Erkam bin Ebi'l-Erkam and it was located at the top of Safa Hill. Darül Erkam played a strategic role in the spread of Islam. Muslims increased their religious knowledge and strengthened their solidarity there. This house is considered the first educational centre of Islam and holds great importance in Islamic history.[68]

68 Sorularla İslamiyet,https://sorularlaislamiyet.com/kaynak/mekke-donemi

Esat continues, "While we were carrying out these activities, the leftist groups that had come from Türkiye earlier were well-organised and tried to hinder our activities. They had more connections with the official authorities in Australia. We also met with some official authorities. New people joined our activities." The study circles held during the weekdays and weekends in this house eventually bore fruit. The activities in this house led to the idea that homes and institutions were needed to develop Hizmet Movement. Indeed, in later years, dersanes would be opened in Melbourne and Sydney, and these dersanes would eventually lead to the opening of dormitories. Dormitories would form the foundation for the opening of schools. It can even be said that the first institutional starting point of the service in Australia was the 'Darül Erkam,' which was temporarily used as a dersane.

2.17. Ensar Questions: What is the Purpose of Life?

Imam Ghazali says, "Doubt leads a person to question, and questioning leads to the truth."[69] Ensar would also turn to truth and reality through questioning. His story is briefly as follows:

Ensar migrated to Australia with his family at the age of 15. He enrolled in a middle school upon arrival. Ensar did not understand the lessons because he did not know English. Later, an elderly teacher was assigned to teach him English. The elderly lady tried hard to teach him English face to face. Ensar was bothered by the foul smell coming from this teacher. He started skipping classes because he didn't like school. He was going to school just for the sake of it. Eventually, he dropped out after the 10th grade.

Ensar was the child of a culturally Muslim Turkish family. His father attended Friday prayers, and the family fasted during Ramadan. According to Ensar, there was a cultural Islam in the family.

Ensar recalls, "We had an imitative faith. We only knew as much religion as we saw from our grandparents and parents. I remember an incident that happened when I was young. We went to a bar with 5-6 friends. We were sitting in a corner of the bar. I had played with and grown up with these friends since coming to Australia. We loved each other. One of them said something offensive about the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). I was so angry that I almost got up to hit him. Even though I wasn't practising Islam, I had a

69 İhyâ-u Ulûmi'd-Dîn, Cilt 4, Kitâbu'l-Havf ve'r-Reca (Korku ve Ümit Kitabı).

love for the Prophet in my heart. My love for the Prophet seemed to have been instilled in me since childhood. My cultural life types continued for a while.

I had a Turkish neighbour whom I loved very much who passed away at the age of 23. His death caused many questions in my mind. I thought to myself, one day we will die too. So, what is the purpose of life? What will happen to us after we die? These questions constantly occupied my mind and led me to research." The Hadith says, "Death is sufficient as a preacher for a person."[70] Bediüzzaman said, "If you want advice, death is sufficient."[71]

Ensar started reading religious books to find answers to these questions. The first book he read was Ahmet Cevdet Pasha's book about the life of the Prophet Muhammad. His father had a book called Kara Davut, which he also read. He still hadn't found answers to his questions. Ensar says, "I can say that the death of my neighbour was a turning point in life for me. When I read the Kara Davut book, the topics of heaven and hell specially made me sweat. I remember sweating through the night. Later, I read Necip Fazıl's book 'Çile.' Gradually, I started praying. Of course, I first learned how to pray. Sometimes, I went to the mosque. The imam had great value, and I saw imams that way. After getting married, my life changed even more. We started to acquire a new environment. In other words, I was looking for a religious environment and a spiritual group of friends. Especially those who were married were my preference."

Ensar heard that a friend's wife had started wearing a headscarf. She had previously been unveiled but covered herself for religious reasons. Ensar and his wife began establishing relationships with that family upon hearing this. That friend introduced Ensar to Mus'ab. Through Mus'ab, Ensar started attending Risale-i Nur study circles at the dersane in Richmond. He saw that everyone was reading and commenting on a section from the Risale-i Nur. Over time, he was greatly influenced by these conversations. Ensar found what he was looking for and never left the Hizmet Movement.

When his eldest son was born, Ensar said, "I will start praying now," and he began to pray. However, Ensar's friends were non-practising Muslims. His wife, Emel, was annoyed by their drinking wine when they came to their house. She did not have a religious life, but she was still annoyed by their drinking.

70 Tabarani

71 Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, Mektubat s.273.

She was also looking for a spiritual family. Later, they met Ceyhun Bey and his family. They went to their house. Emel initially did not want to take off her shoes. But Ceyhun Bey's wife said, "We pray on these carpets, so can I ask you to remove your shoes." Emel thought to herself, "What narrow-minded people." She thought, "Let's take them off; we won't stay long; we'll leave early." While talking to Ceyhun's wife, she learned she had also been unveiled before and showed Emel her unveiled photos. Later, Ceyhun Bey and Mus'ab Bey visited Ensar and his wife. Before they arrived, Emel searched for appropriate clothing and finally found something suitable. When they arrived, they wanted to sit separately as men and women. Ceyhun's wife talked about how beautiful living was according to Islam.

Ensar regularly attended the spiritual study circle of Risale-i Nur and one day told his wife, "This is how my life will be from now on. I will never pressure you about religion." Emel saw that Ensar was determined to practise his religion. Emel recounts, "One day, I thought, whatever, I'll pray too, and I started. But I was praying unveiled, with long nails. I was doing it just to fit in. People around me said it wouldn't work that way. I told my mother-in-law about this situation. I told her that people around me said prayer couldn't be performed like this. She said, 'My darling, you continue, Allah will accept it.'" Covering while praying is obligatory, but some Islamic scholars say new practitioners can pray like this until they get used to it. However, the most appropriate and accepted way is to cover your head.

2.18. Emel's Dream

Ensar continued attending Risale-i Nur study circles. Once, he brought Said Nursi's book "Tarihçe-i Hayat" (Biography of Said Nursi) and placed it on the table, telling his wife Emel, "Read this book; you will benefit from it." The book contained a photo of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, who appeared old and was covered with a blanket. Emel initially did not want to read it. She thought, "This person's face does not look pleasant. Why should I read about his life and waste my time?" Later, she sincerely repented and sought forgiveness for her negative thoughts. Although she had not yet started wearing a headscarf, she had begun to pray. Once, while praying, she found her hands and long nails, which she had grown for fashion, very unattractive. After the prayer, she immediately cut her nails.

Emel's grandparents were devout Muslims, but her parents were not. Her father and uncles had leftist views. Emel herself had doubts about religion and even the existence of God. When she first came to Australia, there were no religious families among her family and friends. However, she saw some women wearing headscarves over time and mentioned this in a letter to her father. Emel recalls, "In my letter, I wrote that I had come to a place where there were people whose minds were covered in cobwebs. My father replied, 'My dear daughter, be careful. Don't let those cobwebbed minds influence you.'" Emel's father had studied in the same class as PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan. Despite this, both Emel and Ensar prayed a lot for her father to become a practising Muslim.

Emel recounts, "One night, I had a dream. A table was set among palm trees, and someone was sitting at the head of the table. Women formed a long queue to register their names, and the person at the table recorded them individually. In my dream, I felt chills. I was looking at the person writing the names. He asked me, 'Why aren't you coming?' I replied, 'They are covered (hijabi), and I am not one of them.' The person at the table, who resembled an Indian scholar, said, 'I am writing their names, but your name is already written here.' He told me, 'These covered women are waiting for you.' I asked again, 'Why are they waiting for me?' Then, I approached the Indian scholar at the table. He was dressed in white, resembling the ihram. He advised me, 'You will do this and that, behave like this.' When I went to the women, I saw that some were reading books and others were learning the Qur'an. I had seen some of these women in previous Risale-i Nur study circles. The scene resembled a spiritual lodge." Emel could not remember the advice given to her in the dream.

After this dream, Emel decided to start wearing a headscarf. While those around her were partially covering, Emel fully embraced modesty and began to learn about her religion. This marked the beginning of her journey in the Hizmet Movement.

Emel says, "This was the first dream I had. After this dream, I decided to cover myself. Some people around me partially covered, but I decided to cover fully. I dedicated myself more to learning my religion. I met with Esat's wife once or twice weekly and read books together. She encouraged me to read more. As I read the Risale-i Nur, I felt more at ease because I was finding answers to the questions in my mind."

In my opinion, the scholar Emel saw in her dream was Imam Rabbani. Imam Rabbani lived a very humble life. He was a descendant of the second caliph, Umar ibn al-Khattab. Bediüzzaman considered him a spiritual master. He said in one of his statements, "If I were invited to visit Imam Rabbani Ahmad Faruqi in India today, I would endure all hardships and dangers to visit him."[72]

2.19. A Memory About Ensar

Hacı Efendi, a friend of Ensar, shared a memory about him: "Once, Ensar and I went to visit a non-practising Turkish Muslim who was against the religion. . The man was shirtless. He shouted and scolded us. When Ensar said 'Allahu Akbar,' the man fell to the ground. He got up and approached us again, shouting. When Ensar said 'Allahu Akbar' again, the man fell again. This happened a third time. Each time Ensar said 'Allahu Akbar,' the man fell. Eventually, he calmed down, and we sat and talked."

2.20. Halis' Tears

Halis was a pure-hearted Anatolian man. Like almost all other Turks, when he came to Australia in 1985, his goal was to work for five or six years, save some money, and return to Türkiye . Halis was someone who tried to practise his religion and also loved community activities. In 1985, he was persistently asked to join the Keysborough Turkish Islamic and Cultural Centre's board. Halis told them, "I am a mechanic. I have very little knowledge about Islam. I am not worthy of that position." But they insisted, saying, "You have a good heart, we know you. The important thing is to do the work for Allah." Unable to resist their insistence, he joined the board and served for about seven years.

The mosque board first bought a small church, converted it into the mosque and started praying there. However, it was too small, and they needed a larger place. Later, a friend brought money from abroad to build a mosque, and they attempted to acquire a more prominent place. Halis played a significant role in purchasing the land for the current Keysborough Mosque. They later acquired approximately 100 acres of land where the current mosque and Mount Hira College are located. At that time, the Keysborough Islamic Society bought it as a branch of the Fatih Mosque in Coburg. Initially, some

72 Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, Mesenev-i Nuriye, Şahdamar Yayınları, İstanbul, 2007, s.117.

people said, "What will we do with such a large land?" The mosque board, including Halis, insisted, "We can build a mosque, a school, a football field for our youth, and many other things." Eventually, they succeeded.

When they started building the mosque, a problem arose with the political Islamist administration at the Coburg Mosque. The mosque administration opposed the building project of the Keysborough branch's board. They split into two factions and ended up in court. The legal battle lasted over five years, costing thousands of lawyer and court fees. Halis recalls that some even questioned his and his like-minded friends' Islamic faith. However, he and the board did not give up. He says, "Looking back, I say alhamdulillah and believe we made the right decision. Now, there is a college, a beautiful mosque, and fields where youth can play sports. I thank Allah because of my humble contribution to this project." Halis was a mechanic, working six days a week and dedicating his free time to community activities and serving his religion.

While continuing his community activities on the mosque board, Halis also met with the students of Süleyman Efendi, who were teaching the Quran in Dandenong. Later, someone introduced Halis to Mus'ab and other Hizmet affiliates who were giving talks at the Bosnian Mosque in Noble Park. They persistently invited him to join their study circle, saying, "Come, let's have tea and coffee together; we can have conversations." Halis asked them, "Dear friends, I am already serving on the mosque board, why are you insisting so much?" They replied, "We love you. We want to be with good friends like you. We would be delighted if you joined us." This marked the beginning of his acquaintance with the friends in the Service.

In 1989, Halis could not attend a camp program in Melbourne, which the late Mehmet Ali Şengül participated in, due to work. He heard many good stories about the camp from attendees. Halis made the necessary financial contribution for his travel expenses to ensure Mehmet Ali Şengül could attend the camp program. While continuing his activities on the mosque board, he gradually became more active in the Hizmet Movement. However, he worked six days a week and participated in the mosque board and Hizmet activities.

Halis admits that he could not fully dedicate himself to the Hizmet activities due to his busy work schedule. Later, with the arrival of Haşim abi and others, his enthusiasm for the Hizmet Movement increased. Thus, his journey in the Hizmet began. Halis recalls, "Later, Haşim abi came. We organised a family camp as a community. I attended the camp with my family. There was

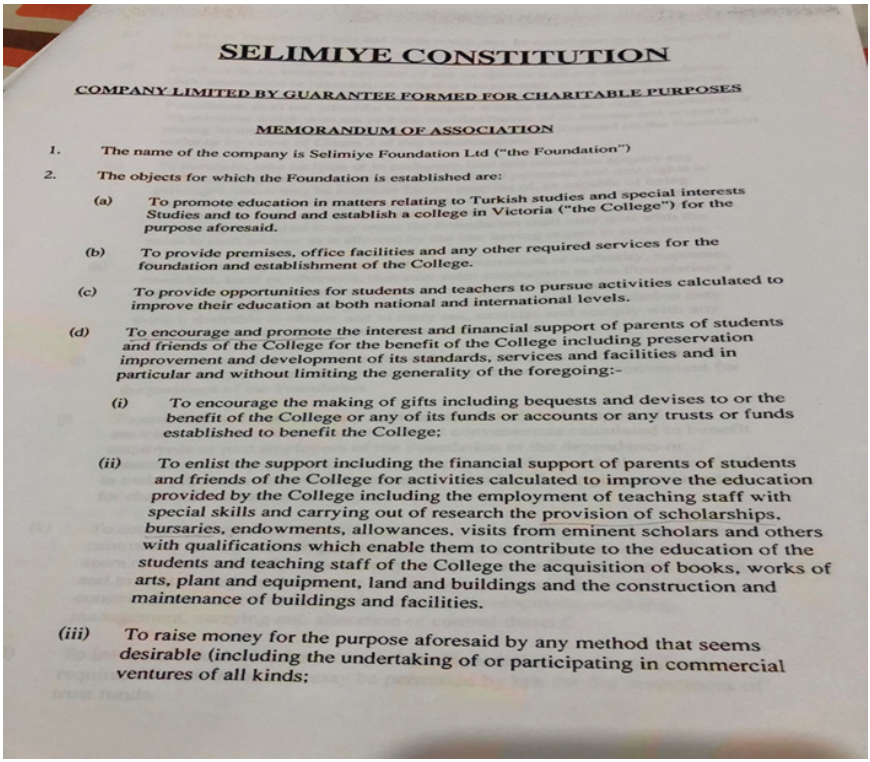
such a beautiful spiritual atmosphere that I cannot describe it. I remember crying about half an hour after the evening prayer, questioning myself, why didn't I join these friends earlier?""

At the camp, Halis made a deal with a friend and sold his car to him, receiving $600 as a deposit, which he placed under his pillow in his room. This amount was significant at the time, equivalent to about a month's salary. The next day, when he was about to leave the camp, he found the money missing. He searched everywhere but could not find it. He reported the situation to Mus'ab, who was responsible for the camp. Mus'ab told him, "Such things don't happen at this camp. Search again thoroughly." Halis searched again but still could not find the money. This caused some distress. Let's hear the rest from Halis: "I left the camp with my 11-year-old child, feeling very upset. On the way, I questioned myself, wondering if I had caused a fitna. I was very sad and even started crying. Seeing me cry, my child in the car also started crying. Later, it was discovered that a friend's 13-year-old nephew had taken the money." Halis was relieved he had not caused a fitna and had never forgotten this memory. In the upcoming sections, you will read about Halis's financial altruism and spiritual life.

2.21. The Establishment of the Selimiye Foundation

Mus'ab's brother, Tahsin Bey, worked at Özlem Gıda (delicatessen) branch in Fitzroy. There was an empty room at the back of the shop. Before the Selimiye Foundation was established and its building was acquired, the Hizmet affiliates used this room as a centre. They gathered there, read books, and listened to Fethullah Gülen Hoca Efendi's tapes.

Habib recalls, "In 1992, the idea of establishing a foundation came up. Of course, we didn't know what a foundation was or how to establish one. Mus'ab brought samples of foundation charters from Türkiye. I remember working on the charter with friends until the early morning hours. We translated some parts from Turkish to English. As far as I remember, we included clauses in the charter to facilitate student exchanges with Türkiye, establish schools in Victoria, open dormitories, and provide scholarships." The name Selimiye for the foundation also came from Hoca Efendi.



SELIMIYE CONSTITUTION

COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE FORMED FOR CHARITABLE PURPOSES

MEMORANDUM OF ASSOCIATION

1. The name of the company is Selimiye Foundation Ltd ("the Foundation")
2. The objects for which the Foundation is established are:
   (a) To promote education in matters relating to Turkish studies and special interests Studies and to found and establish a college in Victoria ("the College") for the purpose aforesaid.
   (b) To provide premises, office facilities and any other required services for the foundation and establishment of the College.
   (c) To provide opportunities for students and teachers to pursue activities calculated to improve their education at both national and international levels.
   (d) To encourage and promote the interest and financial support of parents of students and friends of the College for the benefit of the College including preservation improvement and development of its standards, services and facilities and in particular and without limiting the generality of the foregoing:-
      (i) To encourage the making of gifts including bequests and devises to or the benefit of the College or any of its funds or accounts or any trusts or funds established to benefit the College;
      (ii) To enlist the support including the financial support of parents of students and friends of the College for activities calculated to improve the education provided by the College including the employment of teaching staff with special skills and carrying out of research the provision of scholarships, bursaries, endowments, allowances, visits from eminent scholars and others with qualifications which enable them to contribute to the education of the students and teaching staff of the College the acquisition of books, works of arts, plant and equipment, land and buildings and the construction and maintenance of buildings and facilities.
      (iii) To raise money for the purpose aforesaid by any method that seems desirable (including the undertaking of or participating in commercial ventures of all kinds;

2.22. Association Charter

SELIMIYE CONSTITUTION

COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE FORMED FOR CHARITABLE PURPOSES

MEMORANDUM OF ASSOCIATION

1. The name of the company is Selimiye Foundation Ltd ("the Foundation").
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   (a) To promote education in matters relating to Turkish studies and special interests Studies and to found and establish a college in Victoria ("the College") for the purpose aforesaid.
   (b) To provide premises, office facilities and any other required services for the foundation and establishment of the College.

(c) To provide opportunities for students and teachers to pursue activities calculated to improve their education at both national and international levels.

(d) To encourage and promote the interest and financial support of parents of students and friends of the College for the benefit of the College including preservation improvement and development of its standards, services and facilities and in particular and without limiting the generality of the foregoing:-

- (i) To encourage the making of gifts including bequests and devises to or the benefit of the College or any of its funds or accounts or any trusts or funds established to benefit the College.

(ii) To enlist the support including the financial support of parents of students and friends of the College for activities calculated to improve the education provided by the College including the employment of teaching staff with special skills and carrying out of research the provision of scholarships, bursaries, endowments, allowances, visits from eminent scholars and others with qualifications which enable them to contribute to the education of the students and teaching staff of the College the acquisition of books, works of arts, plant and equipment, land and buildings and the construction and maintenance of buildings and facilities.

(iii) To raise money for the purpose aforesaid by any method that seems desirable (including the undertaking of or participating in commercial ventures of all kinds);

2.23. Why the Names Selimiye and Hudeybiye?

Hoca Efendi suggested both names at the request of the board members. I pondered deeply over these names. Why did Hoca Efendi choose Selimiye and Hudeybiye? It is well known that a person's name can influence their character or destiny. Due to this significance, our beloved Prophet Muhammad (peace

be upon him) was meticulous about giving children good names[73]. In fact, according to Aisha (may Allah be pleased with her), the Prophet would change names that had negative meanings. For example, he changed the name of a woman named Asiyah (عاصية), which means "disobedient" or "rebellious," to Jameelah, which means "beautiful."[74]

In a Turkish proverb, "If forty people call someone crazy, they will start to believe they are crazy." Similarly, the names given to institutions can influence their activities. The word "Selimiye" is derived from the Arabic root S-L-M, the same root from which "Islam" is derived, meaning "peace." In my opinion, one of the greatest wisdoms behind Hoca Efendi's choice of this name is that it serves as a symbol or model for bringing peace to people, Muslims, and the broader society.

The Treaty of Hudaybiyyah holds significant lessons in peacemaking. During the treaty negotiations, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) accepted a request to remove his title "Messenger of Allah" and instead signed as "Muhammad, son of Abdullah." This was a great sacrifice for the sake of peace. Many companions initially objected, but the Prophet's decision ultimately led to a lasting peace.[75] The Treaty of Hudaybiyyah was a pivotal moment in Islamic history, as it established a period of peace between the Muslims and the Quraysh of Mecca, allowing Islam to spread more widely. Mursal Farman calls this treaty "the Mother of All Peace Treaty in Islamic history" [76]

2.24. The Relationship Between Hudaybiyyah and the Hizmet Movement

The title may have peaked your interest—what connection could the Hudaybiyyah Treaty and the Hizmet Movement have? Before the Treaty of Hudaybiyyah, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) sent Uthman ibn Affan to Mecca to negotiate peace terms. News then arrived that Uthman had

73 Tirmidhi, Adab, 66.

74 Müslim, Edeb, 14.https://www.islamveihsan.com/cocuklariniza-guzel-isimler-koyun.html

75 Mustafa Asım Köksal, İslam Tarihi, s.2012-2050, https://archive.org/details/islam-tarihi-asim-koksal-tum/page/n2149/mode/2up?q=Hudeybiye

76 Mursel Farman, (2022). Examining Ibn 'Umar's stance during Fitan times and its impact : Re-reading his approaches to peace and conflict [PhD Thesis]. s.55 Australian Catholic University https://doi.org/10.26199/acu.8y949

been martyred. In response, the Prophet asked his companions to pledge their allegiance. According to historical sources, the first to pledge was Abdullah ibn Umar, with some narrations even suggesting that he pledged twice.

While researching Hudaybiyyah, historian Mursel Farman made fascinating observations. Abdullah ibn Umar, who witnessed the era of the Four Caliphs and lived through part of the Umayyad period, refrained from encouraging revolts and the use of weapons amid the turmoil that began with the martyrdom of Caliph Uthman. His counsel was for restraint, and he exhibited extreme caution in this matter. Not only he but also nearly 100.000 companions abstained from participating in battles among Muslims—only around 100 of them engaged in such conflicts.[77]

Particularly during the Umayyad era, Abdullah ibn Umar opposed armed conflicts and advocated for persuasion and peaceful methods. His stance influenced later scholars, such as Imam Abu Hanifa, Ahmad ibn Hanbal, Imam Shafi'i, and Imam Malik, who also rejected armed rebellion, even against unjust rulers.[78]

One could argue that the positive action method frequently discussed in Bediuzzaman Said Nursi's works resembles Abdullah ibn Umar's approach. Despite experiencing oppression, Nursi vehemently opposed internal revolts, citing the high cost of innocent lives lost in such uprisings. He endured years of persecution with patience and even stipulated in his will that no revenge should be taken on his behalf.

Although the articles of the Hudaybiyyah Treaty seemed disadvantageous to Muslims, the Prophet Muhammad signed it nonetheless. This treaty paved the way for peace and had a profound impact. Abdullah ibn Umar, who pledged allegiance to the Prophet twice at Hudaybiyyah, deeply understood the wisdom behind the treaty and consistently opposed armed rebellions among Muslims, even if they appeared justified. His reasoning was rooted in the awareness that such rebellions often result in the loss of innocent lives.

Having endured years of oppression, Bediuzzaman forgave all who wronged him and urged his followers to eschew vengeance.[79]. Likewise, Fethullah Gülen, drawing inspiration from the Qur'an, Sunnah, the early

77 Farman, ibid.

78 Farman, ibid.

79 Tarihçe'yi Hayat)https://sorularlarisale.com/musbet-hareket-ne-demektir

generations of Islam, and Nursi, recognised the paramount importance of peace for Islam and Muslims. He once stated, "Islam means peace, and it spreads in places where peace prevails."[80]

For this reason, Gülen frequently named institutions in non-Muslim countries with terms that evoke peace, brotherhood, harmony, love, and affection. I believe this is why the late Fethullah Gülen named foundations and institutions 'Selimiye' and 'Hudaybiyyah'—both serve as reminders of peace.

2.24. The First Major Fundraising Effort in Melbourne

Fethullah Gülen Hoca Efendi frequently emphasises 'himmet' (generosity and collective effort), highlighting the importance of service and sacrifice. He often speaks of the beauty of servitude to Allah and bowing only before Him, underscoring the role of 'himmet' in this path. He also stresses the significance of 'himmet' and 'infak' (charitable giving), citing the generosity of the Companions of the Prophet (Ashab-ı Kiram) as an example. In this context, he mentions that even today, some individuals rise through effort, generosity, and sacrifice. But how did 'himmet' begin in Australia?

Establishing an institution requires significant financial resources. At the time, the Selimiye Foundation board could not meet this need. After consultations among the members, it was decided to invite an influential senior Hizmet affiliate from Türkiye to a fundraising program. Everyone was encouraged to invite those they knew to contribute to the 'him met'. A significant fundraising event was planned in Melbourne, similar to those held in Türkiye.

Halis recalls, "After consulting with the board members, we decided to organise a 'himmet' similar to those held in Türkiye. Our goal was to have our building, as up until then, we had been renting spaces, which was quite challenging. The board decided to hold a 'himmet'.

"One evening, we gathered at Mehmet Aydınoğlu's home. Haşim abi, may Allah be pleased with him, gave an inspirational talk. That night, perhaps the largest amount ever collected in the history of Turks in Australia was raised. From what I remember, it was around $90,000. The women also donated their gold jewellery, totalling around $100,000. This 'himmet' became widely known in the community, and it caused quite a stir because no mosque had ever collected even a quarter of that amount. People were astonished, saying,

80 Personal Communication, 2007.

'The Nurcus (means Hizmet affiliates) collected so much money in one night—how is that possible?' Alhamdulillah, that money became the foundation for purchasing the first building for our Hizmet Movement."

Mus'ab, before the 'himmet', consulted with relevant individuals in Türkiye and invited Haşim abi, one of the senior affiliates of the Hizmet Movement at the time, to speak at the fundraising event in Melbourne. Habib remembers the first 'himmet': "In January 1992, Haşim abi came. Our first 'himmet' gathering was held at the home of the late Mehmet Aydınoğlu. About 60-70 people attended, including women. Haşim abi spoke about the importance of charitable giving. Then, everyone began pledging amounts. However, we were far below our target. At that moment, a note was passed from the women's side. It read, 'We've given what we can—our bracelets, gold earrings. What are you waiting for? Why aren't you giving more?'"

According to one of the women present, an elderly lady removed her bracelets and gold ring and donated them. She even tried to remove her earrings but struggled so much that her ear began to bleed. She eventually called her grandson for help, and they cut the earrings off to donate them. Inspired by the women's note, the men became more enthusiastic and increased their pledges. The total amount pledged was around $90,000. Mus'ab adds, "From what I recall, the women donated over three kilograms of gold. With this money, we purchased the first building where the Selimiye Foundation is now located."

The spiritual atmosphere during that 'himmet' was so profound that people competed in making pledges. One of them was Metehan, who attended the gathering and wept profusely. He later shared that he had no money with him that day. Overwhelmed, he stepped outside and continued crying. He said, "If I had a billion dollars that day, I would have donated all of it." Metehan later donated his car twice for educational activities.

The news of the 'himmet' and the amount raised spread quickly among the community. During a Friday sermon at the Broadmeadows Turkish Islamic Society, the imam removed his turban and placed it in front of him, saying, "On Laylat al-Qadr, this mosque was packed, yet I couldn't even collect $5,000. Aren't you ashamed?" He then demanded that everyone go home and bring at least $1,000, threatening to lock the mosque doors until $5,000 was collected. This shows how the 'himmet' model of the Hizmet movement gradually influenced other community organisations.

Selimye Foundation Dormitory building in 1992

2.26. The First Official Institution: Hudeybiye Boys' Dormitory

As the Hizmet Movement grew, the board realised the need for more permanent institutions. The homes they used were no longer sufficient or suitable. Habib explains, "The lack of an institution in Melbourne limited our activities. It was especially challenging for the women, who often held charity bazaars in car garages. Many of us had young children, and during winter, it was even harder. The children would get sick in the cold, and it was no better in the heat, as the garages had no heating or cooling. This compelled us to find a place to gather and do our meetings and other activities. We purchased the current Selimiye Foundation building for this purpose and later acquired the adjacent property."

However, they lacked the funds to establish the institution. Most of the members were from working-class backgrounds with limited incomes. Mus'ab recalls, "Despite the challenges, we started the dormitory construction. We said, 'We need to make a move and do something. The circumstances are pushing us, and so are you.' We had a good network of young people and were running weekend preparatory courses for the university. We rented a place in

Collingwood. We needed to institutionalise, but could we manage it? At the time, we only had one dersane in Melbourne."

Ensar adds, "Before the Hudeybiye dormitory was established, we were all worried about raising our children here, educating them and safeguarding them from bad habits. Our goal was for our children to receive a good education, be raised with good morals, and become role models of society in Australia. The path to this was through establishing dormitories and schools. The idea of building a dormitory arose from these concerns."

Mus'ab continues, "We opened the first dersane but couldn't afford the rent and were struggling. When financial difficulties hit, the dormitory construction stalled due to insufficient funds. I even sold my minibus, which made headlines in the Turkish Solu newspaper and donated the money to the dormitory.[81] Other members also made significant financial sacrifices. This kept the project going, and we fulfilled our promise. The Hizmet affiliates truly made sacrifices, and we witnessed remarkable acts of heroism. For example, Metehan donated his car twice. Ensar was fearless and never shied away from sacrifice. Similarly, Ehad, who ran a kebab shop in Wollongong, moved to Melbourne and donated $10,000 annually to the cause. He was a true hero."

Halis describes Ehad's generosity: "Ehad was the Abu Bakr[82] of the Hizmet Movement. He would bring his kebab machine to our picnics and serve everyone voluntarily. This went on for years. Sometimes, 300 to 400 people would attend these picnics. We would share the principles of the Hizmet Movement with them through actions and words. This helped us gain many friends. We held talks for men, women, and children at the picnics. These volunteer activities had a profound impact. We also made efforts to

81 During the brutal internal war in Bosnia, a qurban donation campaign was launched to support the struggling Bosnians. As a result of this campaign, approximately 2,500 qurban were sent to those in need. However, 'Türk Solu' newspaper reported that Musab had used the collected donation funds to purchase this minibus. In response, Musab took the newspaper to court and ultimately won the case. Details of this campaign will be provided in the coming section.

82 Halis resembled Ehad in regard to his generosity as Abu Bakr, a companion of the Prophet who donated all his wealth. While preparing for the Tabuk expedition in 630 CE, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) called upon his followers to contribute resources to support the campaign. In response, Abu Bakr al-Siddiq (may Allah be pleased with him) demonstrated unparalleled generosity by donating all his wealth to the cause. When the Prophet inquired what he had left for his family, Abu Bakr replied, "I left them Allah and His Messenger," indicating his complete trust in divine provision. This act of selflessness set a benchmark for devotion and sacrifice within the early Muslim community.

avoid provoking jealousy from other communities. Looking back, although our numbers were small, Allah blessed us with the ability to achieve what many could not."

"We had opened the first dersane but couldn't afford the rent and were struggling. I witnessed Ensar's heroism when he said, 'If necessary, we'll sell our cars and donate money for the dormitory.' Indeed, when financial difficulties arose, the dormitory construction halted due to a lack of funds. Ensar sold his car and donated the proceeds. This kept the project alive, and we fulfilled our promise. Our friends made serious sacrifices, and there were many acts of heroism."

While many spent their weekends relaxing or picnicking, the women of the Hizmet movement organised charity bazaars, prepared food at home, and sold items at festivals to raise funds for educational services. One Hizmet affiliate woman recalls, "We earned a lot from the items we sold at charity bazaars and donated all of it for the dormitory construction. Allah blessed our efforts. As we sold, people brought more items for us to sell."

Halis adds, "Alhamdulillah, we purchased the first dormitory building in Broadmeadows with the funds raised. The construction was completed, and around 40 to 50 students began living there. Every night, two volunteers of Hizmet affiliates would stay at the dormitory, cook meals, clean, and act as spiritual fathers to the students. Most of Hizmet affiliates were working during the day. After work, they would come to the dormitory to take turns on night duty. This was a significant act of altruism. Sometimes, we would check on the children at night, covering them if they had removed their blankets. Since we had to work the next day, we took turns sleeping at the dormitory."

Halis continues, "Once, I fell asleep on a sofa bed in the dormitory. In my dream, I saw the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), and Hoca Efendi, along with some spiritual leaders, visiting the dormitory. They said, 'We have come to visit you. Insha'Allah, many beautiful things will happen here.' I woke up trembling, filled with excitement. In another dream, I hosted Hoca Efendi at my home. My mother, who had passed away, appeared in the dream and said, 'My son, you have such wonderful friends.' The dormitory became a means for us to reach people in many suburbs of Melbourne."

Ensar recalls the construction of the Hudeybiye dormitory: "The Hudeybiye dormitory was conceived to educate our children and the children of the community. The late Mehmet Aydınoğlu went to Türkiye and brought

back around 60,000 German Marks. Of course, this wasn't enough to buy a dormitory building. Later, we held a fundraising dinner. With the funds raised, we purchased a house and the adjacent property to build the dormitory. The entire project cost around $400,000. After buying the buildings, we had about $30,000 left. Alhamdulillah, we largely completed the $400,000 project through volunteer labour, which kept costs low."

Emel mentions that the women were active during the dormitory construction, organising numerous charity bazaars, which is called kermest in Turkish. She says, "We asked people for unused items. They even emptied their dowry chests and gave us the items for the bazaars. We held many charity bazaars, and as we did, more items kept coming from homes."

The adjacent building was later added to the dormitory. In the next chapter, you will read about Hoca Efendi laying the foundation stone for this building.

2.27. The meal that did not decrease

Emel, the wife of Ensar, recalled: While the construction of the Hudeybiye dormitory was ongoing, one evening around 9 PM, My husband called me. He said, "15-20 of us are here at the dormitory. We're working and we're hungry. Can you cook us some food?" At that time, I didn't know how to drive, and my children were just 3 and 7 years old. I couldn't go to the market at that hour. So, I opened the refrigerator and decided to cook whatever I could find. I made rice pilaf and a potato dish, preparing two pots of food. My younger son woke up from the smell of the food and asked for some, but I didn't give him any, thinking it wouldn't be enough for the workers. Later, Ensar came and took the two pots to the construction site. Exhausted, I fell asleep.

The next morning, when I woke up for prayer, I saw the two pots I had sent to the previous night's construction site in the kitchen. When I opened the lids, I found the food almost untouched, as if no one had eaten it. This upset and angered me. I thought, "I went through all this difficulty to cook and send them food, but they didn't like it." I asked Ensar, "Why didn't you eat the food?" He replied, "We all ate from it until we were full." In other words, 20 people had eaten from those two pots, but very little food was consumed. Ensar and I saw this as a blessing from Almighty Allah."

Ensar shared: "One of the greatest contributors to the dormitory construction was Cemal. He was skilled in construction and worked as

a master, while others worked as his apprentices. Everyone volunteered. Whenever Cemal called us for the dormitory construction, we would go. Once, he called me and said, 'We need to do this and that, come tomorrow.' When I woke up the next morning, I was shivering with a cold and aching all over. But I couldn't refuse to go. I went to the construction site and started working despite my illness. After a while, I realised the shivering had stopped, and I was healed. This was another blessing from Almighty Allah." Mus'ab shared his thoughts on the dormitory construction:

"When I think about it now, we were few, but with the sacrifices made, Allah granted us the ability to achieve things that many couldn't. For example, in the first Selimiye dormitory, all these friends contributed financially and through voluntary labour. They would come from work at 5 PM and work until late at night. Sometimes, we worked until 2 AM. As I recall, the neighbours complained a few times because of the noise from the construction. The police came and warned us because we worked during the day and dedicated our evenings and weekends to the dormitory.

Across the street from the dormitory lived a friend named Gürcan from Adana. He would always pass by, but we never invited him out of curiosity. He had left-leaning ideology and had some doubts about religion. Later, he started attending our spiritual study circles. The late Ahmet Veli Hoca worked on him and significantly influenced him. Ahmet Veli Hoca was very social and would take a close interest in anyone he met. He took a close interest in Gürcan, who completely changed and became a good believer and respected citizen. Seeing us work late into the night, he would cook at home and bring food to the dormitory. In later years, he would make döner kebab at home and offer it to visitors. Later, he and Ahmet Veli emigrated together to another city. Gürcan Bey would come to the dormitory, clean it, wash the dishes, cook, and run all sorts of errands."

Mus'ab reflected: "Now, I wonder, what motivated these people? If I expressed it in two words, it would be 'love and affection. Love and affection were enough to change people like Gürcan and bring them into the Hizmet Movement."

2.28. Ensar, the Man Who Forgot His Way Home

One of the Hizmet affiliates, Ensar's friend, recalls: "Ensar used to live in Dandenong, about an hour away from Broadmeadows. When the construction

of the dormitory began, he moved to Broadmeadows. He would come to the dormitory construction site after work and volunteer until late at night. One night, he worked at the dormitory until 11 PM. Then, he got into his car and started driving towards Dandenong, where he used to live. He drove for about 45 minutes past the city centre before remembering that he had moved to Broadmeadows two weeks earlier. In other words, he forgot his way home. To honour his dedication, his friends nicknamed him "the man who forgot his way home." When I spoke to Ensar, he confirmed this incident.

2.29. Visits to Sydney

Imam Ghazali emphasises that visits made for the sake of Allah strengthen Islamic brotherhood and help individuals progress on the path of piety. He states that these visits are among Islam's beloved actions and bring benefits both in this world and the hereafter. He says, "A believer visiting another believer is a sign of their love for Allah. This love is a blessing that will grant them Allah's shade in the hereafter."[83]

The Hizmet affiliates occasionally visited Sydney to expand the Hizmet Movement activities there. Given the limited resources at the time, they slept in mosques at night instead of spending money on hotels, which they later donated for their spiritual activities.

Once, the board decided to revisit Sydney. After the morning prayer, they set off with a minibus full of people. Ensar, also on the board, said he would join them. Habib shared an interesting story about a visit to Sydney:

"As far as I remember, it was 1988. We decided to rent a minibus and go to Sydney with some Hizmet affiliates. When we went to pick up Ensar in the morning, he saw two or three people smoking in the minibus. He got upset and said, 'I'm not coming with you.' He had quit smoking before and couldn't stand the smell of cigarettes. Despite our pleas, he didn't change his mind and didn't come with us to Sydney. The members who smoked said, 'Please, we won't smoke on the way, only when we stop.' But Ensar didn't relent. We went to Sydney without him. That night, Ensar's wife had a dream. She saw that the members who went to Sydney were at the Kaaba, accompanied by companions. Later, horsemen companions came and sat with the Hizmet affiliates who went to Sydney. The next morning, she shared her dream with Ensar and scolded

83 İmam Gazzali, İhyâ-u Ulûmiddîn, Cilt 2, Sayfa 182.

him for not going to Sydney. When we returned from Sydney, Ensar rushed to us and said, 'From now on, I will never leave your side.' We were surprised and asked what had happened. He then told us about his wife's dream."

Esat remembers: "On Friday evenings, we would go and stay at the mosque overnight, trying to see if we could build a network and expand Hizmet activities in Sydney. Sometimes, we would go by our old cars to Sydney. Two people would sit in the front and take turns driving while the other two rested in the back. Once, we went to the Redfern Mosque for a talk by Garip Hoca. We also visited Erskineville Mosque and met some young people there. These trips became very productive. I couldn't drive much at night because my eyes would tire quickly. I had surgery after an accident, and its adverse effects still linger.

Once, I was driving, and the late Ahmet Veli was sitting next to me. He talked about some spiritual matters and mentioned some divine blessings of saints. In the car, a spiritual hymn of Abdul Qadir Gilani (d.1166) was played. It was lightly raining outside, and the roads were single-lane. Suddenly, I saw a car approaching us, and it seemed like it would hit us. I gently turned the steering wheel, and the car spun around like in the movies. At that time, we were going at least 100 km/h. I quickly hit the brakes. Halis, a very experienced diver, told me not to panic. The car went, hit the barrier on the side of the road, and stopped. Typically, a car going at that speed would have been severely damaged, but ours had almost no damage. This seemed divine blessing to us, and we saw it as divine assistance because something impossible had happened."

Garip Hoca recalls that once, guests from Sydney came to his talk at Redfern Mosque on a Saturday evening. The late Ahmet Veli Hoca gave an inspirational and emotional talk. He gave examples from the companions' lives and explained how they served the religion. His eyes filled with tears as he spoke, and some people in the audience also cried. While researching this project, I came across some young people who listened to Ahmet Veli's talk and said they never forgot it. Indeed, the late Ahmet Veli was very sincere and dedicated to Hizmet Movement.

2.30. The Study Circle on the Golf Course

Esat recalls: "In the early years, our resources were limited, but we reached many people with these limited means. We would take the red books, the

Risale-i Nur, with us for studying purposes, put tea in thermoses, and sometimes hold study circles in a park. We would get into the minibus on rainy days and continue the lessons there. Once, we went to a park, and while we were having the spiritual study circle, balls were thrown at us. It turned out to be a golf course, and we had gone there unknowingly. At that time, we thought the earth was a mosque[84] for us, we would sit in suitable places, hold our lessons, and perform our prayers."

2.31. Sayyid İbrahim

Born in 1932 in Larnaca, Cyprus, İbrahim grew up in a multicultural environment where Turks, Greeks, Armenians, Jews, and Arabs lived together. Ottoman Cyprus was a diverse society. Growing up in harmony with people of different beliefs and cultures fostered his love for humanity and his faith in coexistence.

İbrahim was the grandson of the last Ottoman mufti of Cyprus. His grandfather, Sheikh Mehmed's mother, was a widow who migrated to Cyprus with her six children in the mid-18th century. It is known that a wealthy Arab businessman named Kanan supported this family in Cyprus. It is believed that Kanan might have been a relative, as it is customary in Arab tradition for men to take care of their female relatives. This suggests that Sheikh Mehmed Abdul Aal might have had Arab roots. There is little information about İbrahim's great-great-grandfather.

Sheikh Mehmed completed his education at Al-Azhar University and then went to the Balkans, where he served in religious duties. The Ottoman Sultan recognised İbrahim's grandfather as a spiritual leader capable of solving complex issues. While serving as the Mufti of Cyprus, İbrahim's grandfather was highly respected by the public and the Ottoman administration.

For İbrahim's family, religion and spirituality were as vital as the blood flowing through their veins. Children were given the names of prophets or their relatives. In a household where religious education began at an early age and children understood the necessity of grasping a higher purpose. At age five, İbrahim and his brother Ahmet had a waking vision where they saw themselves building a mosque in a beautiful country in the sky. While lying

84 In hadith, the Prophet says, "The earth has been made for me a Masjid (place for praying) and a thing to purify (to perform Tayammum)"(Bukhari, Kitab as-Salat, 438).

on their backs in their courtyard, they saw a beautiful country in the sky where they were constructing a mosque. In Australia, this vision would come true approximately 65 years later, in 2001. After World War II, both migrated to Australia. Under the leadership of the two brothers, they completed the Sunshine Mosque in Melbourne in 2001. The mosque is now an important Islamic centre built in the Ottoman architectural style.

İbrahim's parents, especially his mother, raised their sons as Ottoman gentlemen. He grew up as a devout individual dedicated to his community. According to the worldview shaped by his family, the world and all its inhabitants belong to Allah and should be respected and protected. A person's duty is to serve all humanity without discrimination.

İbrahim attended the American Academy, a Baptist missionary school in Cyprus, and later graduated from the British Institute of Technology. Influenced by his Western-style education, İbrahim initially found it conflicting with his traditional upbringing based on Islamic Turkish nationalism. Although initially influenced by the school's educational philosophy, he later rediscovered his roots, faith, and culture after moving to Australia.

2.32. His Unknown Story: The Sayyid Lineage of the Dellal Family

In 1984, İbrahim visited his aunt Cemaliye in Mersin, southern Türkiye. His aunt revealed that their family descended from the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), making them Sayyids. This was a family secret İbrahim had not known before. The death of his aunt Cemaliye in 1985 deeply saddened İbrahim. However, due to his modest nature, İbrahim kept this information about their Sayyid lineage a secret for many years, even from his family, and did not want me included in his biography written in 2010.

In 1948, following in his brothers' footsteps, İbrahim migrated to Melbourne for a better life. At that time, there were very few Muslims in Melbourne, and there were no Islamic organisations or mosques. As a young man, he adapted to Australia's dominant culture and lifestyle. Until 1956, he had not met many Muslims. During this period, he met Ottoman citizens like Hüseyin Ara Efendi, Ali Acem Efendi, and Mustafa Amca. These individuals were known for their loyalty to Ottoman traditions and their respectability. İbrahim witnessed the high ideals and interesting dreams of these former Ottoman citizens and was greatly influenced by them.

Over time, İbrahim felt a spiritual void and turned to his spiritual values. He played a significant role in establishing the Turkish Cypriot Association in 1956, the Victoria Islamic Society in 1957, the Preston Mosque in 1963, and the Federation of Islamic Councils of Australia in 1976. Serving the community was a source of honour and pride for his family. İbrahim contributed to the establishment and construction of the following associations, mosques, and educational institutions:

- Turkish Cypriot Association (1956)
- Victoria Islamic Society (1957)
- Preston Mosque (1963)
- Federation of Islamic Societies of Australia (AFIS) (1964)
- Coburg Mosque (1971)
- Thomastown Mosque (1983)
- Western Thrace Association and Prahran Mosque (1974)
- Federation of Islamic Councils of Australia (AFIC) (1976)
- Halal Meat Committee (Chairman) (1976)
- Turkish Cypriot Islamic Association (1986)
- Selimiye Foundation (1992)

2.33. İbrahim's Early Years in Australia

In his early years in Victoria, İbrahim met the descendants of the last Afghan camel drivers and Muslim immigrants who arrived after World War I. He listened to their stories with great curiosity and later shared them with future generations of Muslims. He wanted to keep these stories alive because he believed they had significantly contributed to the exploration of Australia in the mid-19th century.

In the late 1960s, İbrahim played a significant role in bringing Turkish immigrants to Australia and helping them settle in their new homeland. Additionally, İbrahim contributed billions of dollars to Australia through the export of halal meat (Islamically permissible) to Muslim countries. These contributions earned him the Silver Jubilee Medal from Queen Elizabeth II in 1977 and the Order of Australia Medal from the Governor-General in 2007.

Throughout his years representing and leading Muslims in Australia, İbrahim met with significant political and religious leaders such as Iran's spiritual leader Ayatollah Khomeini, Indonesian President Abdurrahman

Wahid, Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan, Turkish Directorate of Religious Affairs President Tayyar Altıkulaç, the global Sufi leader Sheikh Nazim al-Kibrisi, and the global Turkish Muslim spiritual leader Fethullah Gülen.

Due to his role in forming and expanding the halal meat industry, he met with ministers from Australia, Indonesia, Iran, Algeria, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates.

In 1989, the late Mehmet Ali Şengül came to Melbourne and delivered a Friday sermon at Coburg Mosque, which İbrahim attended. Şengül's sermon was about love, and İbrahim was deeply moved by it. After the Friday prayer, he met Şengül, which led to his introduction to Mus'ab and Esat from the Hizmet Movement. This marked the beginning of İbrahim Dellal's journey with Hizmet. His proficiency in English played a crucial role in the establishment of the Selimiye Foundation and the acquisition of Işık College.

Meeting the global spiritual leader Fethullah Gülen in 1991 was a turning point in his life. Gülen was the source of inspiration İbrahim had been seeking for years. İbrahim internalised Gülen's views on education and community service. To him, Gülen was a contemporary version of the 13th-century Muslim mystic Jalaluddin Rumi, whose poetry focused on love and spirituality. From that point on, İbrahim dedicated himself to educating Muslim youth.

İbrahim's love for community service was instilled in him by his family while growing up in the multi-faith environment of Cyprus. Serving the community was a source of honour and pride for his family, as it was seen as a form of worship in Islam and a fundamental value in Turkish culture. The culture of service and hospitality were two essential principles that İbrahim's parents lived by. İbrahim made these principles, inherited from his parents, a part of his life. For İbrahim, helping others was a form of worship. After meeting the Hizmet Movement, his love for giving and working for others, especially in education, grew even more potent.

Not everyone accepted İbrahim's actions, character, and views. Some Muslim community leaders and members criticised him for being opportunistic and hypocritical. However, his gentle nature and aversion to conflict prevented him from responding to these criticisms. İbrahim preferred to build trust gradually and approach others with compassion. Many people appreciated and loved him for these qualities.

Despite officially retiring from the telecommunications sector in 1991, İbrahim continued to volunteer six days a week at the Selimiye Foundation until two months before his death. He never wanted to give up the time he dedicated to helping others or his volunteer work. İbrahim said, "If I don't do this, I will die. This is a part of my life, and I will do it until my last breath." He prayed to Allah twice a day, asking for a longer life and good health to continue serving various communities in Australia. He also said, "If I had another life, I would call on wealthy individuals and try to convince them to spend all their wealth on the education of low-income children." İbrahim believed that "a peaceful society and a good economy are based on good education with moral values."

2.36. The Camp Visited by the Companions in a Waking Vision

Mus'ab, Esat, Habib, and their friends continue to hold annual camps. However, my research revealed that the 1989 camp attended by the late Mehmet Ali Şengül Hoca Efendi played a crucial role in laying the spiritual foundation of the Hizmet Movement. During those years, the negative impact of the September 12 military coup was still ongoing in Türkiye. Muslim faith groups were under strict surveillance, and their freedoms were limited. This was also a fact for the Hizmet Movement. Mus'ab explained how Mehmet Ali Şengül Hoca Efendi came to Australia:

"Mehmet Ali Hoca came to Australia during a challenging time. Now, I understand why he was called as the 'Samsunlu Hoca' in Fethullah Gülen's Şadırvan sermon in Izmir. Before coming here, as far as I remember, he was sentenced over 20 years. However, he appealed to the Supreme Court. His trial was still ongoing at that Supreme Court. When I went to Türkiye, I suggested to Hoca Efendi that it would motivate our friends if senior Hizmet affiliates visited Australia. Hoca Efendi generously said, 'Take whoever you want.' He even mentioned some names. After consulting with the senior Hizmet affiliates there, they agreed that it would be beneficial if Mehmet Ali Hoca came to Australia. While the case was still ongoing in the Supreme Court, it was very good that Mehmet Ali Hoca came here because he might have stayed in Australia if a sentence had been issued."

Habib recalled that before Mehmet Ali Şengül Hoca Efendi arrived, Mus'ab told them in a meeting, "A senior Hizmet affiliate, the right-hand man of Fethullah Gülen Hoca Efendi, will come from Türkiye. We will hold a camp

with him." Habib thought, "Who could be Hoca Efendi's right-hand man? What is he doing here? How many of us will be in the camp?"

According to Mus'ab, two weeks after Mehmet Ali Şengül Hoca Efendi arrived in Australia, his case was acquitted by the Supreme Court. However, in my research, Mehmet Ali Hoca Efendi's wife said, "After Mehmet Ali Hoca boarded the plane and it took off, the Supreme Court overturned the case, and the news of his acquittal came."

When Mehmet Ali Şengül Hoca Efendi arrived in Australia, he was unwell. Before coming to Melbourne, he had been called to a fundraising dinner in Erzurum. At that time, he travelled by bus. On the way back, he ate a rice pudding and suffered from food poisoning. His mouth and lips appeared as if they were blistered. Despite his illness, they took him from the airport to the camp, which was about two hours away.

The camp was held at a place owned by a German Lutheran. Mus'ab recounted: "We had already started the camp before Mehmet Ali Hoca arrived. But after he set out, a different spiritual atmosphere seemed to form at the camp. I remember friends crying and shedding tears during their prayers. We had held camps with Hizmet affiliates before, but none were like this. I can say that the camp we held with Mehmet Ali Hoca was very different. We had never held a camp with such a spiritual atmosphere before. This camp was very, very different in terms of spirituality. Indeed, that camp became a means of a spiritual revival for all of us. Mehmet Ali Hoca led the prayers throughout the camp. I had previously attended camps with other brothers and participated in various camp programs, but this was very different. When Mehmet Ali Hoca started the prayer with the takbir, everyone felt a luminous state and spiritual upliftment. He led the prayers with tears, and the congregation also shed tears. It was as if we had become angels. Even when we returned home after the camp, everything felt very different. At that camp, there was a famous friend from Izmir named Mucteba who had an interesting dream. In one of his dreams, he saw Hazrat Hamza, the martyred uncle of the Prophet, visiting the camp, showing interest, and paying attention. Hazrat Hamza may Allah be pleased with him, said, 'We have come to participate in this camp.' When Mujteba told us about this, we cried and were very emotional. Mehmet Ali Hoca did not take credit for this beautiful spiritual atmosphere. He said, 'Most likely, in a place 20,000 kilometres away from Türkiye, where the world's alluring temptations surround a person, the fact that these young friends are

so engaged in night prayers and supplications must have been accepted in the spiritual realm. There must have been a divine favour.' I told him, 'Hocam, we have been holding camps for five years, but I have never seen a camp with such a spiritual atmosphere.' You think so, but we see that our senior's prayer has also been accepted."

Two young boys also attended the camp. They would climb to the top of the building and call the adhan. Usually, you cannot call the adhan outside in Australia. But since it was a camp and surrounded by forests, these two young boys called the adhan. They would call each sentence of the adhan half a minute apart, just like in the Selatin Mosques in Istanbul."

2.37. Ensar's Dream of Seeing the Prophet

The Prophet said, "Whoever sees me in a dream has truly seen me, for Satan cannot take my form."[85] Imam Rabbani stated, "When the Prophet is seen in his true form, he is seen correctly, as Satan cannot represent him." Meanwhile, Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi, a prominent scholar, said, "In whatever form or appearance, if a person feels in their heart that they have seen the Prophet, it is indeed the Prophet." Most scholars lean towards Muhyiddin ibn Arabi's view.[86] The Fethullah Gülen Hoca Efendi said, "If someone sees the Prophet in a dream, they should attribute it to the collective spiritual personality rather than themselves."[87]

One of the participants who cried a lot at the camp was Ensar. When recounting his days at the camp, he spoke as if he was reliving those moments and cried. Ensar summarised his memories of the camp as follows: "The summer camp we held with Mehmet Ali Şengül Hoca Efendi in December 1989 is one I will never forget. We took him from the airport to the camp. There was also a lake at the camp. The spiritual atmosphere of that camp was extraordinary. His speeches were always humble. Once at the camp, I saw the Prophet in a dream at night. He offered me grapes, and I ate them. I cannot describe that moment's spiritual atmosphere, feelings, and excitement. When I woke up, I wished I had never woken up."

85 Bukharî, Tabir 2, 10; Müslim, Dreams, 10.

86 https://sorularlaislamiyet.com/peygamberimizi-ruyada-gormek-mumkun-mu-peygamber-efendimizin-asm-ancak-yasarken-kendini-gorenin

87 When Mus'ab asked for a spiritual dream related to Fehullah Gulen, he gave this answer.

Another participant at the camp was Faruk. When recounting his memories of the camp, he became emotional, his eyes filled with tears, and he said the following about Ensar: "Ensar also cried uncontrollably, lost himself, and was taken outside. At one point, Ensar rushed forward to kiss Mehmet Ali Hoca's hand. But Mehmet Ali Hoca did not allow it. Ensar tried to kiss it forcefully, and Mehmet Ali Hoca tried to prevent it. It was as if they were wrestling with each other. Both were crying at the same time."

2.38. Prayer Rugs Soaked with Tears

Ensar expressed that they received the spiritual nourishment they needed during the camp from his talks. He added that while listening to Mehmet Ali Hoca Efendi, Ensar felt they were sitting among the Companions. Faruk, who attended the camp, shared his thoughts on the spiritual atmosphere: "It was perhaps one of the most beautiful moments of our lives. Two young men were trained to call the adhan to please Mehmet Ali Hoca. These young men would climb to different corners of the camp and call the adhan simultaneously. The adhans echoing through the forests made Mehmet Ali Hoca cry. Throughout the camp, Mehmet Ali Hoca led us in prayer. While he led the prayers with tears, almost everyone praying behind him also shed tears. Once, I looked at the carpet and saw it was soaked with the tears of those praying. This continued for a week. Hoca led the prayers with tears, and we cried behind him."

Faruk continues, "Once, Mehmet Ali Hoca was talking about the Companions. I don't remember the exact name of the companion, but I think he was talking about Huzayfah, may Allah be pleased with him. While we were listening to Mehmet Ali Hoca, Hacı Ehat started crying uncontrollably and screaming. The friends calmed him down and asked, 'What happened to you? Why did you lose yourself like that?' He replied, 'When Hoca was talking about the Companions, I saw them before my eyes. I lived that event as if it were happening live.' I don't know exactly how he experienced it or what kind of vision it was." Habib added about Hacı Ehat, "Once at the camp, Hacı Ehat started crying. He was crying so much that I had never seen such crying. He was wailing. No one at that camp remained without tears."

Habib, who attended the camp and said he could never forget it, shared his memories: "I can never forget the camp we held with the late Mehmet Ali Hoca. There were about 30 people. Mehmet Ali Hoca was a very different person. His stance was different, and his speech was different. His talks affected

us all deeply. His voice didn't just reach our ears; it penetrated our hearts. We prayed all the prayers behind him. He cried while leading the prayers, and all the camp participants behind him cried. This happened at every prayer. Our prayers were like this throughout the camp for a week without exception. Some friends cried so much that they would throw themselves outside after the prayer. They would lose themselves (like ascetics). Some would go outside and continue crying behind the trees. They weren't even aware of what they were doing. After the prayers, Mehmet Ali Hoca would give a talk. Sometimes, he would talk about the Companions and tell us in such a way that it pierced our hearts like a spear. Participants couldn't hold back their tears during those talks. When Mehmet Ali Hoca saw this scene during his talks, he sometimes stopped his talk, couldn't hold back his tears, and retreated to his room to cry. One day, the late Mehmet Ali Hoca told Mus'ab Bey, 'Affiliates are purifying themselves with these tears. Let them cry. Allah is cleansing them.'

One day after a talk, one of us said, 'Hocam, if you allow, I would like to kiss your hand on behalf of all of us.' Mehmet Ali Hoca looked at him and said, 'Astaghfirullah. My uncleaned[88] hands would soil your clean lips.' Then, Ensar quickly approached Mehmet Ali Hoca and tried to kiss his hand. Mehmet Ali Hoca tried not to let him, but he insisted. Ensar Bey was almost out of himself. He then tried to kiss Mehmet Ali Hoca's feet, but he didn't allow it either. Some participants of the camp had to take Ensar outside by force. Outside, we told him, 'Get a hold of yourself, what are you doing?' Ensar cried, 'What do you mean? How can his hand be dirty? I want to kiss it.'"

2.39. I Found What I Was Looking For

İbrahim Dellal, who migrated to Australia in 1948, would go to the mosque in Coburg on Fridays and perform the Friday prayer there. When Mehmet Ali Şengül Hoca Efendi came to Melbourne, or perhaps at another time, İbrahim Dellal listened to a Friday sermon given by Mehmet Ali Şengül Hoca Efendi. Hoca Efendi spoke about compassion and love, saying, "We are the devotees of love. We have no time for enmity." These words deeply affected İbrahim. This was what he had been searching for years. He made Mehmet Ali Hoca's statement his motto and often repeated it in conversations with others. İbrahim Dellal frequently said, "After listening to that sermon, I found what I was looking for."

88 It is an expression of humility in Turkish culture and does not mean that the hands are unclean.

2.40. Tensions Among Hizmet Affiliates

Before Mehmet Ali Şengül Hoca Efendi came to Melbourne, tensions existed among the Hizmet affiliates. This discord negatively affected them and could even be described as a partial division. Habib said, "In 1989, we were experiencing some internal issues as Hizmet. There was a frequency mismatch among affiliates. Our brotherhood was somewhat disrupted. We had split into two." The arrival of Mehmet Ali Şengül and the spiritual atmosphere created by the camp resolved this problem. Esat recalled: "Before Mehmet Ali Hoca came to the camp, we had some internal issues between the Hizmet affiliates. One of affiliates was holding separate lessons with a few people. It was as if we had become three separate groups. I couldn't attend the 1989 camp with Mehmet Ali Hoca. Towards the end of the camp, Mus'ab Bey called and said that Mehmet Ali Hoca wanted to visit me. Mehmet Ali Hoca came and cried during the visit. He said, 'If we can't solve this issue of this disunity, what will I tell Fehullah Gülen Hoca Efendi?' I also expressed some things to Mehmet Ali Hoca. Then he said, 'Let's discuss the details again.' Later, we met again. We prayed together. At that time, a very interesting spiritual state occurred. Mehmet Ali Hoca also cried. After that spiritual atmosphere, I said, 'Hocam, there is no problem,' and we continued on the path with the affiliates, running the Hizmet activities together."

2.41. The Prophet Asks: Where Is He?

Many enjoyable memories relate to Mehmet Ali Şengül in Australia. Sabit remembered: "When Mehmet Ali Hoca came to Melbourne, he stayed at the dersane in Richmond for a few days. While he stayed in his room, two young friends stayed in the adjacent room. I can't remember their names. I don't know if it was a dream or a waking vision. One of the young men saw the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) enter the room and ask, 'Where is he?' The young man asked, 'Who, sir?' The Prophet replied, 'Mehmet Ali Hoca.' Since the two young men were sleeping in bunk beds, the one who saw the dream jumped out of bed excitedly and hit his head on the bunk."

Sabit continues, "At that time, I also had a dream. In my dream, Yunus and I were in a lake with Fethullah Gülen Hoca Efendi. We were submerged up to our knees in water. Yunus Bey was on one side, and I was on the other, holding Hoca Efendi under his arms and carrying him towards the shore. When I told Mehmet Ali Hoca about this dream, he said, 'This indicates that

you will take care of this Hizmet.' He interpreted it this way. Indeed, from that day to this, alhamdulillah, this dream came true, and we tried to stand by the Hizmet. May Allah not separate us from this Hizmet, insha'Allah, until our last breath."

2.42. Returning to Türkiye with an Empty Suitcase

Faruk recalled: "When Mehmet Ali Hoca came to Melbourne, he stayed at the dersane in Richmond for a few days. While he stayed in his room, two young friends stayed in the adjacent room. I can't remember their names, but Murat and Mithat come to mind. I don't know if it was in a dream or a waking vision. One of the young men saw the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) enter the room and ask, 'Where is he?' The young man asked, 'Who, sir?' The Prophet replied, 'Mehmet Ali Hoca.' Since the two young men were sleeping in bunk beds, the one who saw the dream jumped out of bed excitedly and hit his head on the bunk." Faruk's account confirms the above narration.

Before returning to Türkiye, the Mehmet Ali Şengül Hoca Efendi stayed a few more days. Habib shared his memory of him: "We hosted Mehmet Ali Hoca in dersane. Later, we went to take him to the airport. Mus'ab went in to see Mehmet Ali Hoca. He asked him for something, and Hoca gave him his prayer cap. Then another friend went in, and Hoca gave him his robe. Seeing this, other friends also went in and asked for something as a keepsake. Hoca didn't refuse anyone and gave whatever he had. I thought I should go in and ask for something too. I went in and tried to kiss his hand, but Hoca didn't allow it. However, he gave me his shirt. Mehmet Ali Hoca gave something to everyone.

Habib continued: "And finally, Mehmet Ali Hoca said, 'I have nothing left, I'm sorry.' He returned to Türkiye with an empty suitcase. I brought that shirt home and told my wife not to wash it. I smelled that shirt for years, smelling Mehmet Ali Hoca's scent. I don't know what happened to that shirt later." As Habib recounted his memories, he nostalgically drifted back to those days and couldn't hold back his tears.

2.43. Could This Happen?

Habib shared: "At that time, my wife was pregnant. While at the camp, I received a call in the evening. My wife had gone into labour and was taken to the hospital by taxi. I immediately went to the hospital from the camp. I stayed

at the hospital for a few hours. Our son was born. I held him in my arms and called Adhan to his right ear and iqama to his left ear.[89] It was time for the morning prayer. There was a chapel in the hospital designated for worship. I performed my morning prayer there and returned to my wife. My wife noticed the change in me at the hospital. She said, 'The camp has done you a lot of good; you've become like a Sufi dervish. We may not find such a spiritual opportunity again,' and she voluntarily sent me back to the camp. However, I still asked for her permission before leaving. Sometimes, my wife would say, 'You left me at the hospital and returned to camp.' She said she could never forget that day. We were so affected by the spiritual atmosphere of the camp that we couldn't see anything else. All the Hizmet affiliates who attended that camp never forgot its spiritual atmosphere."

Mus'ab added, "When we finished the camp and returned home, we felt very down. We felt like a fish out of water. Not only me but also my others felt the same way. The camp was like a purification for us."

2.44. Distribution of Zaman Newspaper in Australia

Until the advent of the internet, the only news source for Turks in Australia was the daily one-hour broadcast by SBS radio. During those years, the educated segment was generally leftist, with some being very opposed to religion and others completely indifferent. A team ran SBS radio without connection to religion and did not consider religious sensitivities in their broadcasts. Their left-leaning broadcasts caused discomfort in many segments of the community. Newspapers from Türkiye were sent by plane and would reach Australia 3-5 days later. We would bring the Zaman newspaper from Türkiye and distribute it. Sometimes, Hizmet volunteers would travel 10 km to deliver the newspaper to a subscriber 2-3 times a week. For example, volunteers living in Liverpool, Sydney, would distribute the newspaper to a few subscribers in Campbelltown 2-3 times a week.

2.45. 3ZZZ Community Radio

During this period, when communication with Türkiye was difficult, volunteers in Hizmet obtained the right to broadcast for one hour a day on a community radio station established in Melbourne. Of course, filling an

89 The Prophet says: "Recite Athan In Baby's Right Ear" (Abu Dawud: 5105).

hour was not easy, and the biggest challenge was delivering daily news. For this, Hizmet affiliates in Türkiye would send newspaper articles via fax, and Hizmet affiliates who broadcasted would try to provide the news daily. During Ramadan, they would also broadcast a program at suhoor (the meal eaten early in the morning before dawn by Muslims fasting during Ramadan) time on that community radio. Esat recalled, "We often had our suhoor during the radio program at the station." Esat never forgot Ahmet Veli's altruism in this regard. Ahmet Veli would perhaps go hungry but still try to do the program.

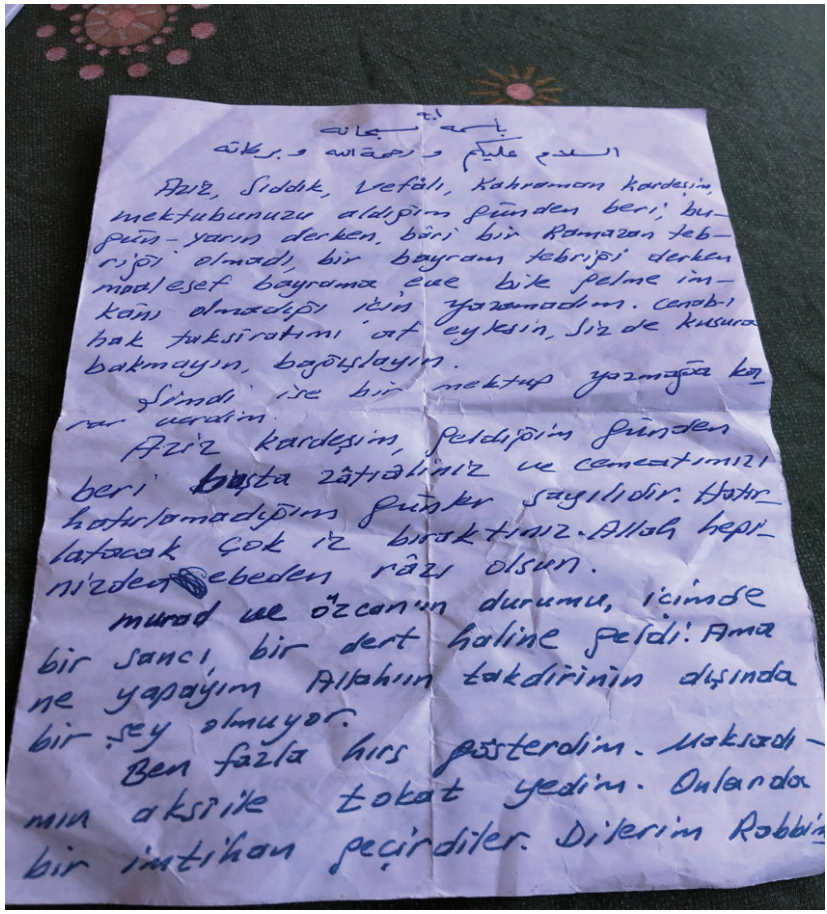
Esat shared: "In those years, we were doing programs on 3ZZZ radio. Ahmet Veli Hoca and I did the programs. This radio station, established for ethnic communities, also had programs for other ethnic groups. We broadcast various topics in the radio programs. The main topics included news, religious talks, discussions related to religion, health issues, other matters concerning the community, and youth-related problems. It was quite popular among the Turkish community. At that time, there was also the 3EA SBS radio established by the state, but leftists ran it. Therefore, our programs on 3ZZZ radio were an alternative to 3EA radio. We did extensive programs on 3ZZZ radio throughout Ramadan. There was also a special program at suhoor time. We would have our suhoor there with Ahmet Veli Hoca." 3ZZZ radio played an important role in announcing the activities of Hizmet, mosques, and other Islamic societies. The extent of its beneficial work became evident during the Bosnian War when programs were made to collect qurbans for Bosnia. You will read about this in the upcoming sections.

2.46. The Hoca Crying Behind the Pillar

While researching for this project, I heard many other enjoyable memories related Mehmet Ali Şengül. After coming to Melbourne for the camp, he wanted to perform Umrah before returning to Türkiye. Two young men from Melbourne accompanied him on this Umrah trip. According to their account, they arrived in Medina. They entered the Prophet's Mosque through the Bab al-Salam gate with Mehmet Ali Şengül Hoca Efendi. The mosque was very crowded. The two young men proceeded and greeted the Prophet at his blessed Noble chamber. But they noticed that Mehmet Ali Hoca was not with them. After greeting him, they started looking for him. They found him crying behind a pillar near the Bab al-Salam gate. They said, 'Hocam, we were worried when we couldn't find you and started looking for you. We were

concerned when we didn't see you with us while greeting the Prophet's blessed Noble Chamber. Then we found you here.' Mehmet Ali Şengül Hoca Efendi replied, 'I have no deeds worthy of presenting myself before the Prophet. That's why I was ashamed and couldn't greet him up close. I only greeted him from a distance.'

The behaviour of the late Mehmet Ali Şengül Hoca Efendi can be seen in the lives of many righteous predecessors. According to the narration, Imam Azam went to Medina 56 times and did not consider himself worthy of greeting the Prophet at his chamber 49 times. In the narrations, the Prophet invited him from his blessed grave on the forty-ninth occasion. Upon this, Imam Azam went and greeted the Prophet.



2.47. A Letter from Mehmet Ali Şengül to Mus'ab

After returning to Türkiye , Mehmet Ali Şengül Hoca Efendi wrote a letter to Mus'ab.

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful
Peace and blessings be upon you, and the mercy and blessings of Allah**

My Dear, Loyal, and Heroic Brother,

Since receiving your letter, I have meant to write back, thinking I would do it today or tomorrow. Unfortunately, I couldn't even send a Ramadan greeting card as I couldn't come home during the holiday. May Allah forgive my shortcomings, and please, you forgive me as well. I have now decided to write a letter.

My Dear Brother,

Since the day I arrived, there have been very few days when I haven't remembered you and your community. You left a lasting impression. May Allah be eternally pleased with all of you. The situation of Murat and Özcan has become a source of pain and concern for me, but what can I do? Nothing happens outside of Allah's decree. I was overly ambitious and received a slap in return. They also went through a test. I pray to my Lord that one day they will return to their senses because I have never harboured anything but good intentions for them.

My Dear Loyal Brother,

In the face of the destruction of everything sacred to us (in our time), I know of nothing that brings more peace and tranquillity to the heart than serving faith and the Quran under the leadership of our seniors, who are tasked with repairing this destruction, and under the inspection of the Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him). May Allah, the Exalted, grant this service to continue forever. Amen.

My Dear Brother,

In one sense, we are close to the source of the inspiration, so we find opportunities to breathe when we are in distress. May Allah, the Exalted, be

your helper in that non-Muslim land 20,000 km away. May He grant you success in your Hizmet with sincerity. May He grant peace to your heart, tranquillity to your home, abundance and blessings to your sustenance, and long, blessed lives to the mothers and sisters who are candidates for martyrdom. I entrust you to Allah's grace to reach your goals and ideals and ask for your prayers. I greet all the brothers and pray for their peace and tranquillity in their hearts and success in this world and the hereafter. I ask for your prayers. Fi amanillah (May you be in Allah's protection). Peace be upon you and upon those who follow the guidance.

Your sinful[90] brother in great need of prayers,

Mehmet Ali Şengül

2.48. Faruk's Journey to Hizmet

Faruk was born in 1961 and migrated to Australia with his family in 1974. As soon as they arrived, he was enrolled in a school. Faruk faced significant challenges in the first few months. Some students at school mocked him, and he struggled until he learned English well. In his youth, he was a true "delikanlı" (a brave young man) in Turkish terms and also a good boxer. He remembered how he was introduced to Hizmet:

"My first encounter with Hizmet was in 1982 when Mus'ab came to Melbourne. He is my brother-in-law. He introduced me to Hizmet. Although I already knew about Fethullah Gülen Hoca Efendi, his tapes were sold at the Coburg Mosque in 1978-1979. As young people, we sometimes hung out at the mosque. Mus'ab had established a youth association called 'Yeni Nesil' (New Generation). He took the youth to camps where religious lessons and various sports activities took place. Yes, Hizmet started like that in the early years. Later, one of the apartments in Richmond was used as a dersane. Mus'ab Bey, his brother Habib, Esat Hoca, Ensar, Hacı Ehat, and a friend named Mustafa attended the spiritual study circles. There were others, but I can't remember them now." He never forgot the camp Mehmet Ali Şengül Hoca Efendi attended. Faruk shared his thoughts about the camp:

90 This is a metaphorical expression of humility in Islamic culture

"Once, Mehmet Ali Hoca was talking about the Companions. I don't remember the exact name, but I think he was talking about Hubayb, may Allah be pleased with him. While we were listening to Hoca, Hacı Ehat started crying uncontrollably and screaming. The friends calmed him down and asked, 'What happened to you? Why did you lose yourself like that?' He replied, 'When Hoca was talking about the Companions, I saw them before my eyes. I lived that event as if it were happening live. I don't know how he experienced it or what kind of vision he saw." As a researcher, I visited Hacı Ehat at his home to ask about this, but he perhaps did not want to discuss it due to his sincerity. Spiritually, the disclosure of such blessings is not welcomed in Islam because of the possibility of showing off.

Faruk continued: "Once, Ensar cried uncontrollably, lost himself, and was taken outside. At one point, he jumped to kiss Mehmet Ali Hoca's hand. But Hoca didn't allow it. Ensar tried to kiss it forcefully, and Mehmet Ali Hoca tried to prevent it. It was as if they were wrestling with each other. Both were crying at the same time." Faruk also has interesting memories of İbrahim Dellal, who supported Hizmet in its early years.

Faruk shared: "İbrahim Dellal had connections with every community. He was like a bee collecting pollen from all the flowers and trying to make honey. But after meeting with Hizmet affiliates, he joined with them. He had found what he was looking for. This continued until his last breath. The late Mehmet Aydınoğlu also made significant contributions to Hizmet. He would go to Shepparton to collect fruits and vegetables to meet the Hudaybiyya dormitory's needs. He also collected other necessary food items for the dormitory. As far as I remember, Sabit and Haşmet Bey were also there in those days."

2.49. We Thought You Were a Hoca

Sabit shared a humorous memory: "I can't remember his name now, but a Hizmet affiliate imam came from Türkiye. After the talk, a man from Denizli started asking him questions. The imam answered a couple of questions but then said he didn't know the answers to others. The man from Denizli said, 'We thought you were an Imam. That's why we came here.' Everyone at the talk laughed a lot at his words." People from Anatolia often assumed that Imams knew everything due to their high regard for them. It is mentioned in Imam Ghazali's book that someone asked the great scholar and founder of the Maliki

school, Imam Malik, 49 questions. Imam Malik (d. 795) said, "I don't know" to 32 questions. The righteous predecessors never answered questions they were not sure about.

In the Ottoman era, mosque imams were knowledgeable not only in religious matters but also other subjects. For example, in the 1850s, an advertisement for an imam for the Süleymaniye Mosque required the imam to know three languages and be knowledgeable in Islamic sciences as well as the Torah and the Bible.

2.50. Why Not Central Asia?

In May 1993, upon Selimiye Foundation's invitation, Eren was asked to go to Australia. At that time, new graduates and those who knew English from Hizmet affiliates mostly went to Central Asia. When Australia is mentioned, Eren is initially surprised and thinks, "Why not Central Asia?" He had to leave his pregnant wife in Türkiye when he first arrived in Australia. His first child was born while he was in Australia. This was not easy for Eren; he missed his homeland and family.

Eren recalled his first months in Australia and what they did: "In the early years, we tried to provide educational services using the methods we learned in Türkiye. In the early days, we had no schools, so we didn't have institutional activities. We mostly tried to tutor students individually or help with middle and high school subjects. The Selimiye dormitory was still under construction. Most of the work at the dormitory was done by volunteers; volunteers also worked on the construction. Every Hizmet affiliate, both men and women, tried to contribute to construction. I remember working on the construction as well. After the dormitory was completed, we started accepting students. Some of these students had previously attended our retreat programs. Families believed it would benefit their children to stay at the dormitory. Some students came from Brisbane, Shepparton, Mildura, and Dandenong.

When the dormitory opened, we started receiving requests from families because they wanted to safeguard their children from immoral habits and ensure they learned Turkish and their religion. They also wanted them to succeed in their education. Many families desired this. The dormitory's total capacity reached fifty students, indicating the serious needs of the families. Due to the painful experiences of those times and the desire to prevent children from losing their Turkish and religious identity, they saw the dormitory as a

lifeline. One of the challenges we faced was accommodating 15-20 students in a big room and having them sleep in bunk beds. Students were used to having their rooms at home and didn't like this situation. However, we organised various activities outside of school; we took the children to sports, picnics, and retreat programs and allowed them to go home every two weeks. These activities made them like."

2.51. At First, I Was Very Scared

Selime, at the age of 20, arrived in Melbourne in November 1993 with her 5-and-a-half-month-old baby and her husband, Eren. Selime recalled that before coming to Australia, "My husband Eren had taken me to the park, and I was six months pregnant. We were walking around differently, and we had just moved to the city where we had recently settled after getting married. When he told me he had been assigned abroad, I was shocked. Being assigned abroad was quite a new situation in the Hizmet Movement. Yes, I knew my father was among the first to be assigned from Izmir to Istanbul, but I was quite surprised and saddened by Australia's involvement. I had taken the first step towards becoming a mother and was very frustrated. It took me a long time to get used to and accept moving to Australia in the early days, but my conscience knew that this was for the sake of Allah and that I wouldn't oppose it. I never told my husband that he couldn't go."

When Selime arrived in Melbourne, it was raining. However, the Hizmet affiliates were very friendly and warm. She learned a lot from senior Hizmet sisters and the aunts from the community and benefited from their experiences. Later, she enrolled in an English course and began learning about Australia.

Selime shared: "Despite having two small children, Firdevs Hanım and I both had young children. Both Firdevs Hanım's husband and my husband were very busy with Hizmet activities. While they were dealing with male students and men, we tried to care for the girls and women as much as possible. It was more challenging for Firdevs Hanım because she had two small children, yet she made great sacrifices by allocating a lot of time for the activities.

We organised Risale-i Nur study circles for female students. Their Turkish was limited because they had grown up here. However, we would later see the benefits of the lessons we did for the sake of Allah. Some students graduated from university and became teachers. We organised retreat programs with the girls, which they enjoyed. We performed prayers and tasbihat at the retreat

programs. Thanks to these young students, we began to love Australia more. Their presence motivated us to live in Australia."

2.52. You Can't Go on Umrah Without Me: A Dream Come True

Selime shared: "When I went to Türkiye for the first time after coming to Australia, I had a dream: I was in a boat passing through a small river flowing between apartment buildings, like in Venice. The boat was moving in one direction. Then suddenly, the Kaaba appeared before me. I was deeply affected by this dream. Later, my husband Eren called and said he wanted to go to Umrah. I told him, 'You can't go without taking me.' He planned to perform Umrah before his trip to Türkiye. Then, Allah granted it, and we went on Umrah together.

When we first came to Australia, Turks had no reputation; they were seen almost as lower-class citizens. Some wanted to educate their children but didn't know exactly how to do it. Most of the Turkish immigrants who came to Australia were workers. They had come to work for a certain period and then return, so they did not focus on their children's education. Education was a secondary issue. There were no role models in this regard. Female students tended to get married soon after finishing high school. Generally, young people were not aware of the importance of education. In my opinion, the arrival of people from Hizmet and their frequent emphasis on education gradually created a change in Turkish people's minds; they started to think, 'Let's educate our children and so they get good jobs and positions in Australia."

In the next section, you will read with curiosity about Fethullah Gülen Hoca Efendi's visit to Australia and what he did there. Additionally, some information about him that you won't find anywhere else is included in this section.

CHAPTER THREE

HOCA EFENDİ'S VİSİT TO AUSTRALIA

3.1. Hoca Efendi's Trip to Australia

Musab would visit Hoca Efendi whenever he went to Türkiye and invite him to Australia. In 1992, when Hoca Efendi visited America, he extended his trip to include a 10-day visit to Australia. Before he departed, his doctors told him, "You shouldn't undertake such a long journey because your health isn't suitable for it." Before heading to America, Hoca Efendi applied for a visa at the Australian Consulate. According to a Hizmet affiliate organising the visa process, obtaining the visa took longer than expected, and Hoca Efendi was asked irrelevant questions by the diplomat in charge of the visa, which frustrated him. Finally, the awaited day arrived. Musab Bey learned that Hoca Efendi had set off from America to Australia. Many Hizmet volunteers went to the airport to welcome him.

Musab recalls, "When Hoca Efendi arrived, he stayed at a friend's house before attending the camp organised that year. After the camp, he stayed at another friend's house from Ankara." Ensar adds, "Before Hoca Efendi arrived, we held consultations. Who would do what at the camp? Where would Hoca Efendi stay? Unfortunately, none of us had a spacious and beautiful house at that time. The best house among us was Ceyhun's, a two-room townhouse. Although we lived in a beautiful country like Australia, none of us had a comfortable and spacious house. We hosted Hoca Efendi at Ceyhun's house before camp."

From my research, I found that Hoca Efendi left some money for the people he stayed with and paid the camp fee while staying at the camp. Hoca Efendi also adhered to the principle of istiğna in Australia. Istiğna means serving the cause of Islam without any material, social, or other expectations.[91] It involves sacrificing one's time, money, skills, and networks for the purpose of da'wah. In return, a Muslim should only seek Allah's pleasure. Seeking financial gain or hoping for political, religious, spiritual, or social status contradicts istiğna. All prophets strictly adhered to the principle of istiğna. True scholars have made this principle a part of their character and have never had any expectations.[92]

Ensar recalls, "We went to the airport when Hoca Efendi was supposed to arrive. We waited and waited, but Hoca Efendi and his companions didn't

91 Fethullah Gülen, Irsad Ekseni, Istanbul: Nil Yayinlari, 2006, p. 67.

92 For detail, see Salih Yucel, A Life in Tears: Understanding Fethullah Gülen and His Call to Service, Tughrah Books, New Jersey, 2008, p 207-227.

come out. Of course, it wasn't like today. We couldn't call. We didn't know if they were on the plane or not. A sign above the door where passengers exited customs stated that entering was prohibited and violators would be fined $1,000. Since the door opened from the inside, it couldn't be entered from the outside. I decided to risk the $1,000 fine. As a passenger was exiting, I slipped inside. Once inside, I acted like a passenger. I saw Hoca Efendi and his companions standing there. At that moment, Necdet Basaran, who was accompanying Hoca Efendi, had a visa problem with his passport, and they were waiting for him. I waved to Cevdet Bey from a distance. He didn't know me, but he understood my gesture. Then I went to them, took the bag and suitcase, and went through customs. At that time, customs officers were very thorough in their inspections. I even told the customs officer that he was a scholar and requested that his bags not be searched." According to Musab, after Hoca Efendi exited the door, he told Ensar, "You didn't leave us alone in our difficult time; I hope you won't be alone in the hereafter, and we will look for you."

At that time, $1,000 was equivalent to about a month's salary for a worker. Ensar's courage is unforgettable.

Musab continues, "When Hoca Efendi was leaving the airport, his face was bright red, indicating he was very uncomfortable." When Hoca Efendi arrived in Australia, he was accompanied by Cevdet Bey and Necdet Başaran. Since Necdet Başaran had a Belgian passport, he had said Hoca Efendi " Sir, I can be your tour guide" However, it turned out he also needed a visa. He thought he wouldn't need a visa because he was a Belgian citizen. While they were holding him at customs, Hoca Efendi didn't want to leave him alone. Even though Necdet Başaran told him, "Sir, you go ahead, I'll handle my issue and join you later," Hoca Efendi replied, "No, it won't do," and waited for him. Thus, Necdet Başaran couldn't be a tour guide; perhaps his intention backfired.

Musab recalls, "We took Hoca Efendi to Ceyhun's house where he stayed. He changed his clothes in his room, came out and then turned to me and said, 'Musab Bey, you've been inviting me to Australia for 4-5 years, and here I am. The doctors warned me not to take this long trip because of my health. They even told me to cancel the trip to Australia. Your and Cevdet Bey's sincerity brought me here.'"

Esat adds, "While preparing a sleeping bed for Hoca Efendi in his room, Cevdet Bey came, checked it, and then took the mattress from the normal bed

and placed it on the floor." Hoca Efendi had slept on a carpet or prayer rug instead of a bed for years[93]. However, after a certain age, he started sleeping on a mattress on the floor. Esat continues, "Hoca Efendi slept on a floor mattress in Melbourne. I think this habit continued in the USA." Hoca Efendi maintained this habit until his death. I believe he wanted a simple life and avoid a luxurious one. So, he was a role model in public and private life.

Musab recalls, "I had previously met with İlhan İşbilen and prepared a program for Hoca Efendi's ten-day stay here. When I handed the program to Hoca Efendi, he read it and said, 'You don't consider my health at all.' I replied, 'Sir, you can do whatever suits your health conditions, and we can cancel the ones you don't want' Then he went to his room. I was very worried about this situation."

Cevdet told Musab, "Don't worry, I'll convince them, we'll manage. Right now, it's the fatigue from the journey and the accumulation of negative events in Türkiye." About two hours later, Hoca Efendi came out of his room, won all our hearts, and complimented us. Musab continues, "I told him again, ' Sir, if your health isn't suitable, we can cancel all the programs.' He replied, 'Musab Bey, can we do half of them and cancel the other half?' I said, 'Yes, if necessary, we can cancel all the programs.' Of course, we had made the news of Hoca Efendi's arrival in the local Turkish Güneş Newspaper in Melbourne. We had announced that Hoca Efendi would come here, lay the foundation of the dormitory, and give a sermon at the mosque. When Hoca Efendi heard this, he said, 'The public has expectations; it wouldn't be appropriate to cancel the program.' Then, we provided information about the foundation-laying ceremony."

Esat recalls, "When I was alone with Hoca Efendi, I remember asking him a question: 'Perhaps we didn't fully understand the Hizmet and got married. Inevitably, we have some family responsibilities. What do you recommend in this regard?' I don't remember exactly what prompted me to ask this

93 He wanted a simple life and imitated Prophet Muhammed (pbuh), who did not sleep on a bed. The Prophet's mattress was made of leather stuffed with palm fibres, and he had a coarse woollen cloth that he (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) would fold over twice and sleep on.
The point is that he slept on a mattress and covered himself with a blanket. He (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said to his wives: "Jibril never came to me whilst I was under the blanket of any one of you apart from `Aishah." (Narrated by Al-Bukhari, 3775)

question at that time. I knew that Bediüzzaman and Hoca Efendi didn't marry. I probably thought their reason for not marrying was to serve the cause of Allah more comfortably. As someone who didn't marry, if Hoca Efendi had inappropriate intentions, what would he have said to such a question at first? You might think that if someone asks such a question, they want to dedicate themselves entirely to the cause of Allah. So, it would be necessary to direct them that way and say, 'Yes, it would be more beneficial to remain single to serve the cause of Allah comfortably,' etc. However, as in everything, I also saw how Hoca Efendi acted according to the straight path in this matter. First, he corrected the negative perspective implied in my question by stating that marriage is a sunnah. Then, looking at me and smiling, he said, 'We need to balance both.' He meant that we must manage to serve the cause of Allah and family responsibilities together. And I think he gave examples from Hizmet elders or companions (maybe both). From a broader perspective, he saw his choice not to marry as a deficiency."

Fethullah Gülen at the ceremony of laying down Hudaybiyya Dormitory

3.2. Laying the Foundation of Hudeybiye Dormitory

The board members of Selimiye Foundation had invited the Deputy Prime Minister of Victoria, the Minister of Education, and 2-3 other members of parliament to the foundation-laying ceremony of the Hudeybiye student dormitory. First, the Government representatives would come and lay the foundation. Mus'ab recalls "We would see them off, and then you would come and lay the foundation. Hoca Efendi said, 'I can't do that.' I realised my words wouldn't make a difference, so we involved Mehmet Aydınoğlu. He spoke with Hoca Efendi and said, "Sir, the mosque congregation will also be at this foundation-laying ceremony; they are waiting for you." Hoca Efendi didn't refuse him.

The Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Education spoke, then laid a foundation stone, and we saw them off. Hoca Efendi spoke for 5-10 minutes about educating children and the next generation. He then emphasised the importance of education and the significant role it would play in the lives of the children. Then, he laid the foundation of the dormitory.

Habib recalls: "When Hoca Efendi arrived, he laid the foundation for our current Selimiye Foundation building. The foundation-laying ceremony was conducted in two parts. First, the members of parliament laid the foundation. Later, Hoca Efendi arrived and saw that concrete had already been poured into the foundation. He asked Mus'ab Bey, "What is this?" Mus'ab replied, "Sir, the members of parliament poured this concrete a little while ago." Hoca Efendi responded, "I do not lay a foundation on top of someone else's work," and he poured concrete in a different spot and supplicated."

Years later, Hoca Efendi reflected on this ceremony, saying, "When we laid the foundation Selimiye Foundation's building in Melbourne, the students of Süleyman Efendi Hazretleri[94] were also present. Looking at their faces, I thought to myself, 'I wish we were laying the foundation for their institutions, that this building belonged to them.'" The respect shown to Hoca Efendi by all the friends and the public amazed and intrigued the foreign guests.

According to Esad, Hoca Efendi was somewhat displeased during the foundation-laying ceremony. The politicians had laid the foundation first, and then Hoca Efendi was asked to pour concrete in another corner. Hoca Efendi later expressed in recordings that he did not participate much in such official events.

94 A Naqshi Sufi Order was based in Türkiye and had affiliates in Melbourne.

Mus'ab recounts, "When we woke up for the morning prayer on Sunday, Hoca Efendi was unwell. He had been suffering from a sore throat since his arrival. The doctors had advised him to avoid stress as it would worsen his condition. About 2-3 days before, he also had a problem with his tongue, which seemed to be split in the middle. He said, 'I can barely move my tongue inside my mouth.' We repeatedly suggested cancelling the program, but he insisted, 'Since people know about it, and you have made it a headline in the local Turkish newspaper, we must proceed.' I suggested, 'We can publish another news article stating that the program is cancelled due to your illness.'"

On Sunday morning, Hoca Efendi was very uncomfortable. He did not lead the prayer; Ahmet Veli Hoca led the morning prayer. We kept the tesbihat short. When he was about to go to his room, he asked what time we would be at the mosque to give a talk. I informed him that the sermon was planned for 12:30. Around 8:30 or 9:00 in the morning, he came out for breakfast but couldn't eat anything and returned to his room.

Around 11:00, Cevdet Bey came to me and said, "Hoca Efendi has put on his coat and is ready to go to the mosque." I went to him, and he said, "Let's go immediately." I replied, "It's 11:00 a.m., and there is still an hour and a half until the call to prayer." But he insisted, "No, they will be waiting for us; let's go early." I tried to explain, "Sir, no one will be there at this hour," but he reiterated his desire to go.

We sent a few Hizmet affiliates ahead to open the mosque. We got into the car and went. We hosted Hoca Efendi in a room at the mosque for about 45 minutes to an hour. Later, I learned that after performing the morning prayer and returning to his room, he wrapped himself in a blanket and tried to rest. Whether in a state of wakefulness or a dream, I don't know, but while he was engaged in his evrad and adkar, he dozed off a bit. During this time, the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and many of his great companions entered the room. Hoca Efendi was surprised and asked the Prophet and the companions, "My dear Prophet, what are you doing in this distant land?" They replied, "Today, there is a sermon here, and we came to listen to it." I realised this dream was why Hoca Efendi wanted to go to the mosque early. Since they were coming, he also felt the urgency to go early. Hoca Efendi ascended the pulpit and delivered a sermon, creating a spiritual atmosphere. He said:

"In today's sermon, Hoca Efendi spoke about the connection between the past and the future. He said, 'If the veil were lifted, you would see Hazrat Abu

Bakr sitting beside the brother beside you.' In his sermon, he urged, 'Even if you came here to endure difficulties and live comfortably for a few days in this world, renew your intention. Say, "I came here for the pleasure of Allah and to be a role model for my religion."' The spiritual atmosphere of that day's sermon was very different."

During those years, a large number of Iranian university students had come to Australia. Many Iranian master's and doctoral students had enrolled in Australian universities, influencing the Islamic associations at these universities. Perhaps hoping that students from Türkiye would also come to this country for master's and doctoral studies, a university student explained the situation to Hoca Efendi. Upon hearing about the activities of the Iranian students, Hoca Efendi was uncomfortable. He said, "If we do not take care of our children, people coming from Iran, Manchuria, and other places will change and transform our children. They might even lead them towards radicalisation."

3.3. The Retreat with Hoca Efendi

Before Hoca Efendi arrived, the Selimiye Foundation board in Melbourne discussed the retreat program. They talked about who would take on which responsibilities and organised accordingly. Ensar recounts, "We divided the tasks related to the camp. As far as I remember, I had a dream that night. In my dream, Mehmet Aydınoğlu was there. Hüsnü Bey was opening the door, saying Hoca Efendi would come. We divided the tasks related to the camp. While at the camp, I observed Hoca Efendi's eating, drinking, praying, and behaviour. He was a very different person. He was very meticulous in every aspect. If one pays a little attention, one can see this difference. I even thought that I wished we could stay silent and live in this atmosphere. That alone would be enough for us. Because some people sometimes ask unnecessary questions. There was a wonderful spiritual atmosphere at that retreat program. Years later, when I went to America and visited Hoca Efendi, I experienced that spiritual atmosphere again."

3.4. Trip to the Camp

Hoca Efendi asked Mus'ab how far the place they were going to was. Mus'ab said it was about 45-50 minutes away. Of course, the car was speeding to

shorten the time and arrive earlier. The driver was pressing the gas a bit more. Hoca Efendi was looking at the speedometer.

Mus'ab recalls, "On the way to the camp, there was a zoo. We stopped by that zoo. There were kangaroos and other animals unique to Australia. When I told Cevdet Bey about it, he said it would be good as Hoca Efendi would be curious. Hoca Efendi fed and gave water to those kangaroos. When we arrived at the retreat centre, Hoca Efendi looked at his watch and said, 'Mus'ab Bey, it has been exactly one and a half hours since we left the house.' I felt that he was a bit upset with me."

3.5. An Unforgettable Memory: The Fish in the Fishless Pond

Mus'ab recalls, "There was a pure-hearted friend named Mucteba. He was a bit naive. Some people would sometimes make fun of him because of his naivety. But he was a very sincere Muslim. There was a small pond in the retreat centre. He told Hoca Efendi that he would offer him fresh fish. He went to the pond's edge, tied a hook to a string, and threw it into the pond. Interestingly, he caught a huge fish from that pond. We were all surprised. Perhaps Allah granted him this favour because of his piety. Such a large fish couldn't be in that pond. Later, Cevdet and I went there to catch fish, but we couldn't catch a single fish despite trying for an hour and a half. We had been to that place before for camping, and there were no fish in the pond, and there never were any later. Especially such a large fish was impossible. One fish wouldn't be enough for all of us. If we only offered it to Hoca Efendi, he would be uncomfortable. So, we went to a nearby fish farm, bought carp, cooked them with the fish caught in the pond, and offered them to Hoca Efendi and the friends." When Habib told the retreat centre owner that they had caught such a fish in the pond, the man laughed, thinking it was a joke. "There are no fish in this pond," he said.

Esat recalls the retreat program: "At the camp, Hoca Efendi would give daily talks and lead the prayers. We listened to the talks with tears in our eyes. Once, Hoca Efendi gave a very emotional talk, and we listened to it with tears again. After the talk, Hoca Efendi said, 'Whichever heart we checked, we saw it beating with the love of Allah.' The prayers were performed similarly. I remember praying almost all the prayers with great reverence and tears. I never wanted those prayers to end. I tried to be in the first row to be closer to the spiritual atmosphere before the prayer time."

Since his youth, Hoca Efendi had been under the scrutiny of a marginal but loud group within the deep state in Türkiye. As a principle, Hoca Efendi tried to avoid actions and behaviours that would annoy the deep state as much as possible. While in Australia, Naci Bey, who was in charge of the Zaman newspaper at that time, received a phone call from the Turkish National Intelligence Organisation. Mus'ab recounts, "Upon receiving that phone call, Hoca Efendi couldn't sleep until morning. He was walking around the house, reciting his avrad. In that state, even Cevdet didn't approach him. Mus'ab recalled that Hoca Efendi said, 'You invited me here. I would come quietly from America, but you announced my arrival in the newspapers before I came.' The people at the Directorate of Religious Affairs and the Turkish embassy had informed Türkiye that I had come to Australia. At that time, Naci Bey was in charge of the newspaper. A five-question letter from the National Intelligence Organisation asked Hoca Efendi to answer these questions urgently. In the letter, they stated that they were unaware of Hoca Efendi's visit to Australia and asked why he was there. Hoca Efendi said, 'Now, I will have to answer many questions when I return.'"

Hoca Efendi generally tried to get along well with everyone as long as no haram or sin was involved. He avoided making enemies. Despite all this, some people, particularly in Türkiye's deep state, never relinquished their hatred and hostility towards him.

Ibrahim Dallal recalls his memories of the retreat program: "The days I spent with Hoca Efendi were the best days of my life. Hoca Efendi spoke briefly and concisely. He would worship at night. He often talked about love and compassion." The few days Ibrahim spent with Gülen were not enough. "We wanted to spend more time with Gülen." This retreat remained an unforgettable memory for him, both physically and spiritually.

The retreat program ended in a wonderful spiritual atmosphere. Everyone who attended was very pleased. That camp service also provided a spiritual boost to the friends. According to the participants, in his short talks, Hoca Efendi spoke about the love of Allah, the love of the Prophet, affection, being beneficial to people, and faith-related topics. Ibrahim Dellal, who was at the camp that day, said, "I found exactly what I was looking for," and kept Hoca Efendi's words as a motto: "Life is very short, there are very important things to do, we don't have time for enmity."

In my research, I found a video recording of Hoca Efendi leading the evening prayer in the retreat program. In the first rak'ah, he recited verses 100,

101, 102, and 103 of Surah Al-Anbiya. In the second rak'ah, he recited verses 104, 105, 106, and 107. The meanings of those verses are as follows:

Surah Al-Anbiya

100. There will be groaning for them therein, and they will not hear therein.

101. Indeed, those for whom the best [reward] has preceded from Us - they are from it far removed.

102. They will not hear its sound, while they are, in that which their souls desire, abiding eternally.

103. They will not be grieved by the greatest terror, and the angels will meet them, [saying], "This is your Day which you have been promised" -

104. The Day when We will fold the heaven like the folding of a [written] sheet for the records. As We began the first creation, We will repeat it. [That is] a promise binding upon Us. Indeed, We will do it.

105. And We have already written in the book [of Psalms] after the [previous] mention that the land [of Paradise] is inherited by My righteous servants.

106. Indeed, in this [Qur'an] is notification for a worshipping people.

107. And We have not sent you, [O Muhammad], except as a mercy to the worlds.

There was a very inspirational spiritual atmosphere at the retreat program. Hoca Efendi spent most of his time in his room, reading and reciting his awrad and adhkar. After the camp, Hoca Efendi went to the airport to go to Sydney without touring any part of Melbourne. He did not tour any part of Sydney or Melbourne. He was offered tours, but he did not want to go.

Mus'ab recalls, "On the way to the airport, I asked him if he had any advice. He thanked me very much and said, 'This invitation has been a mercy for me. We have many friends here, and we have achieved something.' Then I asked him to forgive us if we had made any mistakes or shortcomings. Later, he said, 'Alhamdulillah, I am very hopeful, and I believe better things will happen in Australia.' After he left, I learned that he wanted to stay here for 5-6 days and visit a friend he loved in Japan, but he couldn't go there because he had stayed here longer than expected. While at the retreat, I told him, 'Sir, if you wish, we can reschedule your program, shorten it, and you can leave earlier and go to Japan.' But he said, 'No, you have made so many preparations here.' On the way to the airport, he was a bit hunched over and continued to be hunched over at the airport. He couldn't straighten up."

When Hoca Efendi returned to Türkiye, he recounted his memories from America and Australia during a talk at the Istanbul FKM. In his talk, he remarked, "They asked me do things in Australia that I had never done before, like groundbreaking ceremonies. Many institutions have been established in Türkiye and abroad, yet I have only attended one or two groundbreaking events. In Australia, they asked me to lay the Foundation first. Since ministers were present, they invited me to the official protocol."

Hoca Efendi noted that students of Süleyman Efendi Hazretleri were also present at the groundbreaking ceremony. "I looked at their faces and thought, 'I wish we were laying the foundation for their building.' In the following years, the students of Süleyman Efendi Hazretleri built a beautiful mosque and dormitory in Melbourne. Despite all their efforts, they were not allowed to establish such beautiful institutions in other cities. Perhaps Hoca Efendi's heartfelt wish turned into a prayer, and as a result, they succeeded in founding remarkable institutions in Melbourne."

Fethullah Gülen is leaving the retreat centre

3.6. Ibrahim Dellal: Hoca Efendi, the Rumi of Our Time

Ibrahim's meeting with Fethullah Gülen in Türkiye in 1991 marked a turning point in his life. He had found what he had been searching for. Gülen became the source of inspiration for Ibrahim had long sought. He deeply internalised Gülen's views on education and community service, embracing them with a compassion-centred approach. To Ibrahim, "Gülen was a contemporary version of the 13th-century Muslim mystic poet Rumi, whose poems on love and spirituality are among the most read in the United States."

After meeting with Gülen, Ibrahim dedicated himself to educating Muslim youth. Over time, he read Gülen's articles and books, gaining deeper insights into the Hizmet Movement. He was profoundly influenced by Gülen's approach to serving humanity through love and compassion, absorbing the philosophy of Hizmet at its core.

In 1992, Ibrahim heard from Mus'ab that Gülen would visit Australia to lay the foundation for the first student dormitory at 21 Lismore Street, Dallas, Victoria. He would also participate in a camp for a few days. Eagerly anticipating Gülen's arrival in June, Ibrahim looked forward to being with him at the groundbreaking ceremony and the camp.

When Hoca Efendi came to Melbourne, Ibrahim attended his sermons at the mosque and the retreat program. In a personal conversation, Ibrahim shared how deeply spiritual the program was, expressing how every word and gesture from Gülen left a lasting impact on him. Gülen's interactions also left a profound mark on Ibrahim Dellal, as Gülen was a scholar unlike any other.

During his time in Australia, Gülen spoke about love rooted in one's relationship with God and others. He emphasised the importance of positive thinking and serving without discrimination. He highlighted the need to integrate intellectual and spiritual education, stressing that ideal education should not only impart knowledge in arts and sciences but also nurture compassionate individuals.

Gülen witnessed the success of schools focused on education of both mind and heart in Türkiye and Central Asia, and he found the same spirit of service among the volunteers in Australia. "The schools you establish will succeed in education and contribute to the society in Australia, but you will face many challenges on this path. Do not lose hope," he advised.

Gülen understood that this would be a first for the Turkish community in Australia. The limited financial resources of those involved in Hizmet would

make establishing schools difficult, but their dedication and perseverance would pave the way for future success.

3.13. Did Hoca Efendi Tour Australia?

Throughout his life, Hoca Efendi strived to stay away from worldly pleasures for his self. When he came to Australia, he travelled from home to the mosque or camp and then to the airport in Sydney and Melbourne. He never requested, "I came here; show me Australia's historical and beautiful places." In Sydney, friends suggested, "Hocam, let's show you the city centre. We can go up the tall tower, and you can see the whole city." However, Hoca Efendi declined. Upon arriving in Sydney, he went from the airport to the dersane, from the dersane to the mosque, from the mosque back to dersane and on the day of departure, to the airport. He did not visit any other places. According to close associates, while heading to the camp in Melbourne, they asked him, "There is a small zoo on the way, would you like to see kangaroos?" He said it could be possible. Later, Hoca Efendi fed the kangaroos by the roadside. According to Mus'ab and Esat, Hoca Efendi did not visit any place in Melbourne. In fact, after arriving at the retreat centre, he did not even walk around inside the camp.

With this behaviour, Hoca Efendi tried to emulate the righteous predecessor, Salaf Saliheen, the first three generations of Muslims after the Prophet Muhammed (pbuh). For example, one approached Abu Ayyub al-Ansari from the Companions of the Prophet and asked about the hadith: "Whoever covers a believer's fault in this world, Allah will cover his fault on the Day of Judgment."[95] Abu Ayyub said, "When the Prophet (peace be upon him) said this hadith, I and Uqbah bin Amir were present. I know the text of this hadith, but to be sure, I need to find Uqbah who is in Egypt." He then rode his camel from Medina to Egypt. His journey from Medina to Egypt to personally narrate a hadith he already knew from Uqbah bin Amir exemplifies unparalleled meticulousness.[96]

Upon arriving in Egypt, he went to Uqbah bin Amir's house. His wife said he was at the market. Abu Ayyub went to the market, found Uqbah, and asked him about the hadith text. Uqbah confirmed its accuracy. Then, Abu Ayyub immediately wanted to return to Medina. Uqbah said, "You came from far

95 Ahmad b. Hanbal, Musnad, 4: 153.

96 https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/ebu-eyyub-el-ensari

away; rest a bit before returning." But Abu Ayyub replied, "No, I came only to confirm this hadith text," and did not accept even a short rest, fearing it might harm his intention and sincerity. Hoca Efendi had a purpose for coming to Australia. His purpose was not to tour. Therefore, he did not accept touring, fearing it might harm his intention and sincerity.

3.7. Trip to Sydney

Hoca Efendi went to the airport to travel to Sydney for the program there. Esat said, "Hoca Efendi, Necdet Hoca, and Mus'ab will pass through domestic flights to Sydney. After entering, I saw Hoca Efendi walking fast as if going downhill. Then, when Hoca Efendi could not see us behind him, he stopped and waited. On the way back from Sydney, Necdet Hoca sat next to him. I saw Hoca Efendi reading something. Necdet Hoca was following along. I think he was reviewing his Qur'anic memorisation. Necdet Hoca also followed him in recitation. When I saw him in that state, I thought, 'Hoca Efendi does not waste his time even on the road and at the same time, he is training his student.'"

3.8. The Light Above the House

A person from the Sufi order said to Garip Hoca, "Let's visit Hoca Efendi together." This person was pure-hearted and frequently remembered Allah. After performing the morning prayer, Garip Hoca and this Sufi friend went to the dersane where Hoca Efendi was staying. Upon arriving, the Sufi immediately kissed Hoca Efendi's hand as he came out of his room. Hoca Efendi was surprised and said, "I never let anyone kiss my hand. How did you manage to kiss my hand?" The Sufi replied, "Sir, I kissed your hand as if it were my sheikh's hand." Hoca Efendi said, "It must have happened because you kissed with the intention of your sheikh; otherwise, I do not let anyone kiss my hand." Later, this Sufi told Garip Hoca, "After the morning prayer, as we approached the house where Hoca Efendi was staying, I saw a light descending from the sky onto the house." This Sufi sometimes shared such experiences with Garip Hoca. Once, while leaving the mosque, he heard birds sending blessings upon the Prophet (peace be upon him).

3.9. Why Can't They Come Together?

While sitting with a group of guests in Sydney, a friend named Süleyman, who had previously worked as a journalist, asked Hoca Efendi, "Hocam,

there are many religious groups, communities, and Sufi Orders in Türkiye. Why don't they come together and form a unity?" Hoca Efendi replied, "Even in our current scattered state, they (aggressive secularists) cannot tolerate us and think badly of us. If we were united, they might do even worse things. Moreover, if one day our Hizmet is banned in Türkiye, other groups will serve Islam." This was in 1992. Indeed, from 2014 onwards, Hizmet was gradually banned in Türkiye, and after the 2016 coup attempt, it was banned entirely. They do not even allow three people to come together and punish those who do. What Hoca Efendi said in 1992 came actual years later. Starting from December 17-25, 2013, all activities of the Hizmet Movement were banned. Even two people coming together or helping the spouse of someone in prison or children of Hizmet members studying together was considered terrorism. As of the day these lines were written, approximately 745,000 men, women and children had been detained. About 170,000 were arrested. Thousands of babies grew up in prison.

3.10. Invitation for a Cup of Tea

Hoca Efendi delivered a sermon to hundreds of people at the Gelibolu Mosque in Auburn, Sydney. In his sermon, similar to the one in Melbourne, he asked the congregation to renew their intentions. He emphasised being for Allah in this country, being a good Muslim, and ensuring people think positively about Islam by observing their behaviour. He encouraged them to inspire others to become Muslims and to foster positive thoughts about Islam and Muslims.

As Hoca Efendi was leaving the mosque, a Turkish Haji from Kayseri invited him, saying, "Hocam, if you are available, please come to our place for a cup of tea." Hoca Efendi apologised, stating that he did not have the time. About two years later, the Turkish Haji from Kayseri visited Hoca Efendi in Istanbul. Hoca Efendi addressed him by name and said, "Hajı Efendi, you had invited us for a cup of tea, but it was not meant to be. However, Allah has blessed me to have tea with you." The Turkish Haji was amazed by Hoca Efendi's memory and his recognition of him.

3.11. Iranian Students

While staying at the dersane in Sydney, a group of university students visited Hoca Efendi. A medical student mentioned, "Hocam, many Iranian students are pursuing master's and doctoral degrees at universities in Australia. They

seem to represent Islam in their way, primarily representing Shia Islam." Hoca Efendi expressed his disappointment that Sunni Muslims were not pursuing higher education. Four years later, this medical student visited Hoca Efendi in Istanbul. Hoca Efendi addressed him by name and recalled, "Mr. So-and-so, you mentioned something about Iranian students when we were in Sydney." The medical student was impressed by Hoca Efendi's memory.

3.12. The Young Man Kissed on the Forehead

Hakan recalls: "When Hoca Efendi came to Sydney in 1992, he had a sermon at the Gelibolu Mosque. However, I had gone to lead the Friday prayer elsewhere and missed his sermon. After leading the Friday prayer, I quickly went to the Gelibolu Mosque, hoping to catch Hoca Efendi's talk. As I arrived at the door, Hoca Efendi was leaving the mosque. Halit Bey introduced me to him. Hoca Efendi asked me some questions. I told him I was a university student with two subjects left. He prayed for me and then kissed my forehead. This was a great honour for me."

3.12. The Broken Chair

All the furniture in the darsana where Hoca Efendi stayed in Sydney was collected from the streets, repaired, washed, and used because the Hizmet affiliates did not have money to purchase new furniture at that time. Only two students were living at the dersane. One chair in the living room had a broken leg but had been repaired. When Hoca Efendi sat on that chair, one side of it collapsed. Halit and Erkam Bey, who were there, were very embarrassed by this situation. However, Hoca Efendi did not say anything. Yes, when the first dersane was rented, they could only pay one month. Since they did not have money to buy furniture, they collected discarded items from the streets, brought suitable ones to the dersane, and used them. I included this in the book to show future generations how far we have come and to emphasise the importance of being grateful to Allah for the available resources.

3.14. Hoca Efendi's Humility

Garip Hoca recounts: "When Hoca Efendi came to Sydney, I visited him at the dersane where he was staying. When I entered, he was sitting in the living room. He stood up and said, 'Welcome, Hocam.'" Garip Hoca was amazed

by the humility of this scholar, who was more than 20 years older than him. Despite having studied together in the same class at the Faculty of Theology for five years, some friends who had taken even small positions in the Directorate of Religious Affairs looked down on Garip Hoca. However, Hoca Efendi, with all his knowledge and as the spiritual leader of such a transnational faith-based movement, addressed him as 'Hocam'. "Garip Hoca says, 'One word from him was enough to conquer my heart and more. That day, I decided to be an admirer or follower of Hoca Efendi.'

Garip Hoca listened to Hoca Efendi's talk at the dersane. Later, Hoca Efendi asked him to lead the afternoon prayer. Garip Hoca hesitated but led the prayer upon a sign from one of his close associates present. Later, Hoca Efendi signed a book and gave it to Garip Hoca, praying for his success in his spiritual work.

Garip Hoca had read many Quranic verses and hadiths related to humility and had perhaps preached hundreds of times on the subject. He had read about humility in the works of Imam Ghazali, Imam Rabbani, and Bediuzzaman. However, seeing Hoca Efendi, who embodied humility, made him feel the essence of humility as his core principle. According to Imam Rabbani, true humility is recognising oneself and realising one's helplessness in the face of Allah's greatness. Bediuzzaman sees humility as a reflection of faith and sincerity. He believes recognising one's helplessness and poverty strengthens one's connection to Allah. He also stated that humility is a means to reach the truth. Rumi says, 'Be like the earth in humility and self-effacement!' Just as the earth is trampled underfoot, accepts all the filth of creatures, absorbs it, and then presents them with pure flowers, fruits, and food, a humble believer is like the earth. Those humble like the earth, with Allah's grace, nurture the seeds of faith in their hearts.[97]

Hoca Efendi sees humility as one of the cornerstones of Islamic life. In his teaching methods, he describes himself as an individual who discusses with his students, considering this approach a natural reflection of his humility and self-effacement. In his lessons, he shows great respect for righteous predecessors and uses a humble tone even when presenting his views. For example, he expresses his interpretations as, 'The poor, the insignificant one has such a comment, such a consideration.'

97 Toprak Gibi Olmak" Ne Demek,https://www.islamveihsan.com/toprak-gibi-olmak-ne-demek.html

Garip Hoca knew that Hoca Efendi taught some theology students. He asked, 'Sir, if I come to Türkiye, can I join your study circle?' Hoca Efendi replied, 'With pleasure, you would honour us.' Later, Garip Hoca went to Türkiye and visited him in Izmir. Seeing the academic level of the theology students in his study circle, he believed he was not at their level and did not deserve to be in that higher academic study circle.

Garip Hoca had visited Hoca Efendi in Izmir with an Australian who had seen the Prophet in a dream and converted to Islam. They sat together for breakfast. The Australian Muslim thought, 'I wish we had come to Hoca Efendi in nice clothes, like a suit.' After breakfast, Dr. Kudret, Hoca Efendi's private doctor, took them to a shop in Izmir that sold suits and said, 'Hoca Efendi ordered a suit for each of you. Choose what you like, and Hoca Efendi will pay for it.' The Australian Muslim was very surprised. He later said, 'I only thought about it in my mind. It seems Hoca Efendi understood what was in my mind.'

Garip Hoca returned to Türkiye after completing his work contract at the Directorate of Religious Affairs as an Imam of Redfern Mosque. However, since he had obtained permanent residency and had a part-time chaplaincy job in prisons, he decided to return to Sydney. But upon returning, he was concerned about what to do and how to serve the community. He was in contact with Hizmet volunteers. While thinking about this, he saw Hoca Efendi in his dream that night. They went to the Selimiye Mosque in Istanbul together. The mosque was filled with people both inside and in the outer courtyard. Garip Hoca went with Hoca Efendi to the mosque's main gate, but it was too crowded to enter. However, Hoca Efendi entered the mosque. After that, he woke up. The next day, Hizmet affiliates visited Garip Hoca and asked him to be a board member of the Feza Foundation. Garip Hoca believed the dream was related to this and told the Hizmet affiliates who visited him that day about his dream. From that day on, he always continued volunteering at Hizmet Movement.

3.15. The Cigarette Burning His Hand

The late İsmail Verim had strong national feelings but little religious knowledge initially. He was somewhat distant from religious communities but had a good character. He recalls: "Şule College had just been established and needed a sound system. They told me about it, and I went to the school to contribute since it was a community school. As I entered the yard, one of the children

playing there, either a kindergarten or first-grade student, approached me and said, 'Assalamu alaikum, uncle, welcome.' Upon hearing this, I turned around and cried my heart out. The child's greeting affected me so much that I started volunteering at the school after that greeting. Later, I attended the talks and joined the Hizmet Movement as a volunteer. Alhamdulillah, I started performing my prayers. In short, my life changed a lot. However, I still couldn't give up smoking. I wanted to quit smoking but couldn't manage to do so. One night, I dreamed of walking on the street in front of Şule College. I saw Hoca Efendi coming from the opposite direction. At that moment, I had a cigarette in my hand. I felt very ashamed when I saw Hoca Efendi and squeezed the burning cigarette into my palm so that he wouldn't see it. Of course, I approached Hoca Efendi. The burning cigarette in my palm burned my hand. And I woke up. After that dream, I repented and quit smoking from that morning on and never smoked again."

3.16. The Hoca Who Cried for Someone Who Didn't Pray

A Hizmet volunteer recounted: "When I started volunteering, I also began performing my five daily prayers. Gradually, I was improving my religious knowledge. However, my wife was not as fortunate as I was. She didn't pray. Once, she saw Hoca Efendi in her dream. Hoca Efendi asked her, 'Why don't you pray?' My wife replied, 'Hocam, I don't know how to pray.' Upon hearing this, Hoca Efendi sat down and cried his heart out. My wife woke up from his crying and started daily obligatory praying that day."

3.17. I Didn't Cry This Much When My Father Died

A Turkish nationalist was the head of a social association. One of the board members had duplicated Hoca Efendi's sermon video cassettes and gave him four of them. A few days later, the board member visited this community leader. The community leader said, "After the night (isha)prayer, my wife and I started watching the videotapes you gave us. We were both crying while watching. Then we watched the second, third, and fourth tapes; we couldn't stop watching them. We watched them with a box of tissues beside us, constantly wiping our tears. I swear, I didn't cry this much when my father died." This person later rejoiced when he heard that the Hizmet Movement was opening schools in Central Asia and other countries. He was incredibly overjoyed when he heard the children reciting the Turkish National Anthem.

3.18. Fethullah Hoca Was Right

A person who spent most of his time playing games in coffee shops was sceptical of Garip Hoca's interest in educating young people. From time to time, he believed the gossip and said things like, "This hoca is instilling hatred for Atatürk in young people." Because of this, he had secretly listened to Garip Hoca's talks with young people a few times but never heard such things. His son also attended the talks and started performing his five daily prayers. After some time, this person was diagnosed with cancer and began treatment in the hospital. A few days before his death, Garip Hoca visited him in the hospital and recited the Quran for him. Let's hear the rest from his son: "My father was very ill and said to me, 'Son, can you take me out to the balcony?' I took him to the balcony of his room, and he sat on a chair. It started raining heavily within ten minutes, as if the skies had opened. Of course, I took my father inside. My father looked out the window and said, 'Allah is the greatest. There was no rain just ten minutes ago, and now it's pouring. Fethullah Gülen Hoca Efendi was so right to cry. If I recover, I will try to help these Hizmet affiliates until my last breath, inshallah.' However, he passed away without recovering."

3.19. A Memory with the Late Mahmut Esat Coşan Hoca Efendi

After the post-modern coup of February 28 in Türkiye in 1996, the pressure on religious people and communities increased significantly. As a result, Mahmut Esat Coşan Hoca Efendi, the head of a Naqshbandi Sufi Order, came to Australia to escape the pressure. After arriving, he travelled to various places in Australia and gave talks everywhere. However, he occasionally made inappropriate remarks about the Hizmet Movement and Hoca Efendi. Some of his followers went further and used harsh language against Hoca Efendi and the Hizmet Movement. The late Esat Coşan Hoca Efendi claimed he had requested a meeting with Fethullah Gülen Hoca Efendi, but his request was rejected. This reached Fethullah Gülen Hoca Efendi, who then asked Mehmet Ali Şengül Hoca Efendi, "Did you visit Esat Efendi in Australia?" Mehmet Ali Şengül replied, "No, I couldn't visit him." Let's hear the rest from Cemal, who worked for Hizmet Movement in Australia for many years:

"Once, Hoca Efendi told Mehmet Ali Şengül indicating that 'Esat Hoca Efendi wanted to visit him, but he had refused'. Fethullah Gülen Hoca Efendi said, 'I didn't receive any information about his request for his visit. If I had heard he wanted to visit me, I would have run to the airport, picked him up,

and carried him on my back to the retreat centre where I live' The retreat centre was about a two-hour drive from the airport.

Mehmet Ali Hoca called me and asked me to visit Esat Hoca Efendi on behalf of Fethullah Gülen Hoca Efendi. They were publishing a monthly bulletin at that time, and every issue contained articles against the Hizmet movement and Hoca Efendi. Even the late Esat Hoca Efendi wrote some things against us. I wanted to present this magazine and its contents to Fethullah Gülen Hoca Efendi, but Abdullah Aymaz Abi, one of Gülen's associates, said, 'It wouldn't be appropriate. Hoca Efendi would be very upset.'

That year, Esat Efendi's followers had a mosque in Brisbane. The Imam who had studied at a university in Medina was in charge of the mosque. This imam would speak against the Hizmet Movement in his Friday sermons or talks. I called Ahmet Hoca, one of Brisbane's Hizmet affiliates, and asked him to arrange a meeting with Esat Hoca Efendi. One of the Hizmet affiliates had sent me 100 gifts made from the seal of the Prophet from the sacred relics section. I took one of those gifts and visited Esat Coşan Hoca Efendi with Ahmet Hoca. At that time, a friend named Zakir in Brisbane loved us very much and ran a döner production facility. He was in Esat Cosan's study circle.

We visited Esat Hoca Efendi. After leading the night prayer in the mosque, he read and commented on a few hadiths. We conveyed Fethullah Gülen Hoca's greetings and said, 'Sir, you wanted to visit him, but for some reason, your request didn't reach Fethullah Gülen Hoca Efendi.' Then, I presented the gift I had brought on behalf of Fethullah Gülen. Esat Hoca Efendi hugged me and cried his heart out. He said, 'This is the most precious gift I have ever received.'

There were fruit trees in the courtyard, passion fruit. He picked those fruits with his own hands and offered them to us. After that visit, Esat Hoca Efendi never wrote a single word against the Hizmet movement or Hoca Efendi. I again realised the greatness of Fethullah Gülen's approach in this incident. Hoca Efendi used to tell Hizmet affiliates, 'When you go somewhere, visit the key spiritual figures there, kiss their hands, and ask for their prayers.' He also advised them to ask them, 'Is there any duty for us, any advice?' If they had any advice, you should say, 'I will do it with all my heart.'"

Garip Hoca Recalls: "One day, I met with a friend who was one of his followers and whom I also liked. We met after Mahmut Esad Coşan Hoca Efendi passed away. That follower told me: 'One day, I asked the late Esad Efendi. The followers of our Order claim that you said, " Fethullah Gülen is

connected with the deep state of Türkiye ", Do we have any evidence for this? The late Hoca Efendi said, 'After the February 28 semi-military coup, Gülen sent me a message saying, "Leave the country, the secularists are thinking bad things about you."' Among his followers, they spread the gossip that Fethullah Hoca knew this because he was part of the deep state. My sincere friend told me, 'Later, I realised that Hoca Efendi had educated people for years, and perhaps a few had reached deep state positions. Upon receiving this news from them, Fethullah Hoca Efendi informed Esad Hoca to prevent him from being harmed. Unfortunately, our people misinterpreted this.'"

3.20. The Disciple Trying to Disrupt the Prayer

Garip Hoca remembers: "Once, Esad Hoca Efendi's representative in Sydney told me: 'My wife had a dream in which Hoca Efendi was leading the Hizmet volunteers in prayer in Sydney. While he was leading the prayer, one of Esad Efendi's disciples entered from the right side of the row, exited from the left, and moved around the congregation, disturbing them and trying to disrupt their prayer.' This person also wrote articles against Hizmet and Hoca Efendi in their newsletter. As a result, Esad Efendi's representative in Sydney did not believe their gossip and good relationship with the Hizmet affiliates in Australia."

3.21. Hoca Efendi's Istighna or indebtedness

Ensar recalls: "While Hoca Efendi was in Melbourne, he was a guest at an affiliate's house. As Hoca Efendi was about to return to America from the airport, Cevdet, who attended to Hoca Efendi's needs, came and put some money in the pocket of the jacket of the affiliates who hosted him. I think it was either 100 or 200 dollars. At first, the friend did not want to accept it. Cevdet said, 'It is a principle of Hoca Efendi. If you don't accept it, he will be very upset, please accept it.' The friend accepted the money and, as far as I remember, kept it as a blessing without spending it."

One of the biggest problems in serving religion in the Muslim world is the lack of independence, indebtedness and contentment among scholars and religious leaders towards governments and the public. This quality, possibly the most important principle of religious service after sincerity, has been forgotten or neglected. The Quran (10:72) and the Sunnah emphasise independence, as it is considered one of the main qualities of all prophets, their companions,

saints, great leaders, and true scholars.[98] There are twelve verses in the Quran where the prophets express that they do not seek any worldly reward while conveying or teaching Allah's message. Leading Quran commentators derive from these verses that no worldly reward should be expected while preaching or inviting to religion. According to Tabari[99] and Ibn Kathir (1301-1373), preaching is a religious duty; therefore, there should be no desire for worldly benefits from this duty[100]. Zamahshari (1074-1143) elaborates further, stating that prophets did not seek personal gain, high social status, or positions that would place them above others[101]. Fahreddin al-Razi (1149-1209) goes even further, stating that a person should not even have expectations in their heart while preaching religion.[102]

According to Gülen, those who serve religion everywhere and at all times must follow the path of the Ulul'azm Prophets (the great prophets who brought revelation). Gülen says, "After piety, the most important quality of a believer is indebtedness (istighna)."

Ismail Gönülalan, who attended Gülen's study circle, notes that Gülen did not eat the food given by the community without paying for it. Gülen's students have stated that they have never seen such a principle of indebtedness from any other spiritual leader or imam.

Sabri Çolak from Erzurum recounts: "Gülen's brother was in the hospital. I went with Gülen to visit him. During the visit, Gülen wanted to write a prayer for his brother's recovery. Someone gave him a piece of paper, but Gülen did not want to use it. At first, I didn't understand why he didn't want to use it. Later, I realised that Gülen did not want to use the paper from the foundation hospital. He then wrote the prayer on a blank page of the book his brother was reading in the hospital."

98 Qushayri, Lataif'ul Isharat, http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=3&tTafsirNo=31&tSoraNo=10&tAyahNo=72&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1

99 Tabari, Tafsir al Tabari http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=1&tTafsirNo=1&tSoraNo=10&tAyahNo=72&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1

100 Ibn Kathir, Tafsir Ibn Kathir, http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=1&tTafsirNo=5&tSoraNo=10&tAyahNo=72&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1

101 Zimahshari, Al- Kashshaaf, http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=1&tTafsirNo=2&tSoraNo=10&tAyahNo=72&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1

102 Fahraddin Razi, Tafsir al Kabir, http://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=1&tTafsirNo=4&tSoraNo=6&tAyahNo=90&tDisplay=yes&Page=3&Size=1&LanguageId=1

Gülen is extremely careful not to use anything belonging to the public for himself or his family. Mehmet Eldem, who has known Gülen closely since the early 1970s, says, "Some friends stored Gülen's belongings in a small room in a dormitory building belonging to a Hizmet foundation. Gülen did not feel comfortable without paying rent for it and has been paying rent for that small room for years." Özgür Öztaş, who has known Gülen for over forty years, says, "I have never seen Gülen use any foundation or public property. Once, he visited a dormitory and was offered a cup of tea. To avoid disrespecting us, he drank the tea. However, he paid ten times the price of a cup of tea."

Mustafa Birlik, a student of Bediuzzaman who has been close to Gülen since 1966, recalls that Turgut Özal, who later became the Prime Minister and President of Türkiye, was a candidate for an Islamic party in the parliamentary elections in Izmir in 1977. Özal listened to Gülen's sermon, and then both went to his house for lunch. Özal told Mustafa Birlik that everyone had asked him for something since he started his election campaign, but Gülen had asked for nothing.[103]

Garip Hoca recalls: "When Hoca Efendi came to America for a few months in 1997, I visited him. He was staying in a large house used as a dersane in New Jersey. Once, Cevdet brought a small plate of dates and placed it in front of Hoca Efendi. Hoca Efendi ate one, then immediately asked Cevdet, 'Were these my dates?' Cevdet Bey replied, 'No, an affiliate from Azerbaijan sent them and requested your prayers. After you pray, we will send the dates back to him.' Hoca Efendi immediately asked Cevdet to bring his dates, took a handful, and added them to the plate. He said, 'When I was an imam at a mosque in Edirne, I once ate a couple of tomatoes grown in the mosque's garden and then put the money in the mosque's charity box. But whenever I remember it, I feel a discomfort in my chest.' Indeed, the same day, they brought fresh, sour apples from the apple trees in the study centre's garden and offered them to Hoca Efendi. Hoca Efendi did not eat them, saying they belonged to the foundation (waqf)."

Hoca Efendi has consistently upheld the principle of indebtedness and freedom from expectations throughout his life. If memories related to this topic were collected, I believe they would fill several volumes.

103 For details, see Salih Yucel, A Life in Tears: Understanding Fethullah Gülen and His Call to Service,New Jersey, Tughrah Books, 2018. p 187-207.

3.22: A Historic First: Qurban Sent to Bosnia

When Hoca Efendi arrived in Australia, the Bosnian-Serbian war had already begun, and the Bosnians were in dire straits. According to Mus'ab, Hoca Efendi suggested collecting qurbans from Australia and sending them to the Bosnians during his time in Australia. Ibrahim Dellal, who had long been involved in halal meat export, readily agreed to assist with the logistics.

However, a major concern arose: even if the sacrifices were collected, how would they reach Bosnia, and who would distribute them there? Hoca Efendi assured us of his support in this regard. Mus'ab recalls that this initiative marked the first time in Muslim minority history in Australia and possibly in the world that an entire shipment of qurban from Australia was sent abroad—especially to a war region. This pioneering effort soon inspired the Hizmet Movement and other faith-based groups worldwide to undertake similar projects, establishing a global model for humanitarian aid.

Ensar remembers: "The year was 1992. The war in Bosnia was raging, and Sarajevo was under a complete siege. Many Bosnians had fled to Croatia, but those who remained were in utter despair, desperate to help. In previous years, we have only sent a handful of qurbans to Türkiye for needy students. That year, we contemplated sending qurbans to Bosnia but faced numerous challenges. How would we send them? With whom would we coordinate? Could we even ensure their delivery? Simply sending money was not an option, as the qurbans had to be made during Eid al-Adha. Transporting live animals was impractical due to time constraints and high costs. We deliberated until the early morning hours, with many concluding that sending sacrifices to Bosnia was simply impossible."

Habib adds: "At the time, the war between the Bosnians and the Serbs had taken countless lives, forcing many to seek refuge in neighbouring countries. As Eid al-Adha approached, we discussed what to do with the qurbans. Someone suggested, 'Why not send them to Bosnia?' But the logistics seemed insurmountable. Eventually, Mus'ab contacted Mesut Erişen, a correspondent for Zaman newspaper stationed in Bosnia. The proposal was revisited with our advisory council. While we were determined, we still had no clear plan on how to deliver the meat. The Serbs had blockaded every route, making it impossible to send live animals. We realised the meat had to be slaughtered and packaged before being transported. Many board members remained sceptical, believing it was impossible."

At this critical moment, Ensar stepped forward and declared, "Enough of this doubt! Let's attempt. If God wills it, the doors will open. With His help, we will succeed." His unwavering conviction inspired the group to take the leap. Ensar's courage and determination turned the tide, and the project was set into motion. In a further act of commitment, Ensar even pledged to sell his house if necessary to finance the mission.

Around the same time, news reached Hizmet affiliates in Melbourne from Türkiye that Hoca Efendi was deeply distressed over the war in Bosnia. Overwhelmed with sorrow, he would retreat to the rooftop of his building, pacing restlessly. Upon learning of his anguish, the group became even more resolute. Everyone, regardless of age, mobilised to make the project a reality.

With the help of a few key figures from the Bosnian community in Melbourne, the Hizmet affiliates established communication with individuals in Croatia who could facilitate the distribution of the qurban meat. The campaign was widely promoted in mosques and even aired on 3ZZZ Radio. Donations poured in as the Bosnian war remained a pressing concern for Muslims worldwide, particularly Turkish communities.

Approximately 2,500 qurbans were collected. After Eid prayers, volunteers went straight to the slaughterhouses, where the animals were carefully processed. The meat was cut into small portions, packaged, and loaded into containers bound for Croatia. From there, refrigerated trucks transported the meat to refugee camps housing displaced Bosnians.

The 3ZZZ radio station played a vital role in fundraising and raising awareness. They even conducted a live broadcast with the Vice President of the Turkish Red Crescent. Additionally, Ibrahim Dellal, a respected community leader, leveraged his connections to ensure the successful transportation of the packages.

Despite these efforts, opposition arose. Some religious groups publicly denounced the initiative, claiming that sacrifices could not be sent to a war zone. Misinformation campaigns were launched, casting doubt on the feasibility of the project. Yet, the undeniable success of the first-year silenced critics. In the following year, donations doubled to 2,500 sacrifices. The campaign's legitimacy became undeniable, and what once seemed impossible became an established practice.

Not everyone welcomed the initiative. The Turkish Solu newspaper falsely reported that the funds collected for Bosnia were misused. At the time,

Mus'ab had purchased a second-hand minibus for his large family, leading to unfounded rumours. The accusations culminated in a lawsuit, which Mus'ab won in court, vindicating his name and the integrity of the campaign.

Later, when the Deputy Prime Minister of Bosnia visited Melbourne, Ensar, representing 3ZZZ Radio, attended his press conference. Seizing the opportunity, he asked, "Are you aware that qurbans were sent from Australia to Bosnian refugees? Did they reach those in need?" The Deputy Prime Minister responded emphatically: "If a single piece of meat has reached a Bosnian's stomach in the past six months, thanks to those donated the qurbans sent from Australia. We will never forget this aid."

3.24. More Than Just Meat—A Message of Hope

Habib reflects on the long-term impact of this initiative: "This campaign continued in subsequent years, setting an example for the wider Muslim community in Australia. Before this project, no organised effort existed in Australia to send qurbans abroad. Today, many humanitarian organisations collect qurbans and distribute them worldwide, particularly in Africa. As a result, hundreds of thousands of impoverished individuals can eat meat at least once a year, strengthening the bonds of brotherhood."

A volunteer who travelled to Africa to distribute meat shared a moving encounter: "During Eid, we handed out about three kilograms of meat per family. As I gave a portion to one man, he looked at the meat, then at me, then back at the meat, and then at me again. I asked him if something was wrong. He replied, 'No, it's just that until now, missionaries have always come to help us. This is the first time a fellow Muslim—someone who looks like me—has come to my village and given us food. You are not just giving me three kilograms of meat; you are giving me hope for the future.'"

The qurbans sent to Bosnia were not merely sustenance but a symbol of solidarity, a testament that the Bosnians were not forgotten. Small acts of kindness, particularly in times of crisis, leave an indelible mark on those who receive them.

In the following chapters, we will explore the humanitarian efforts undertaken in Sydney—stories that will touch your heart, bring tears to your eyes, and make you marvel at how dreams became reality.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE HİZMET MOVEMENT PIONEERS OF SYDNEY

In this chapter, the reader will read the brief life stories of the first Hizmet volunteers who migrated to Sydney and those who initially supported the movement in Australia. You will also learn about the activities in the first dersane and dormitory established in Sydney. What sacrifices did Hizmet affiliates make? How did they uphold the service? What motivated them? What challenges did they face? In this chapter, you will find with curiosity the dreams they saw, the tears they shed, and much more.

4.1. Both Migrant (muhajir) and Helper (Ansar): Ebu Bekir

Ebu Bekir was born in Erzincan. He completed primary and middle school in Tercan, a district of Erzincan. When asked how he became acquainted with Hizmet, he replied: "I first encountered Hizmet during middle school. There was a tutoring centre in our town. At the time, I didn't know it as Hizmet; I only knew it as a place for studying Risale-i Nur . When I was accepted into a vocational high school, I moved to Erzincan, where the Hasan Basri Dormitory had just opened. Thanks to my father's efforts, I became the 30th student to stay there. It was a small dormitory, and space was limited. I stayed there for a year and a half. Since it was my first year in the dormitory, the atmosphere was warm and sincere, and I had the chance to get to know the Hizmet Movement. After a year and a half, we moved to Zonguldak. There, the Hizmet affiliates didn't leave me alone. I didn't stay in a dormitory in Zonguldak, but I frequently visited dersanes for study circles. Later, I returned to Erzincan. My father had passed away, but I didn't remain idle in my hometown. I tried to engage in some activities with the Hizmet affiliates. Then, the matter of marriage came up. The person who proposed to me was the daughter of my aunt who lived in Australia—my current wife. After we married, I moved to Australia. Before coming to Australia, I researched people from Hizmet whom I could contact. I went to Ankara, and they gave me the name of Mus'ab, who was in Melbourne."

When he arrived in Sydney, Ebu Bekir contacted Mus'ab. In the years following his arrival in Australia, Ebu Bekir would strive to support the Hizmet financially and spiritually, much like Medina's Ansar (helpers).

4.2. Interesting Coincidences

Ebu Bekir's wife's family lived in Sydney. When asked, "What do you remember about your first days, months, and even years in Australia?" he shared the

following: "In the early years, there were many interesting coincidences, so to speak. We witnessed Allah's grace in many ways. It's hard to remember everything, but I'll share what I can. For example, I had never seen Halit before but recognised him among dozens of people at the airport. Before Halit, another friend had come, and we would duplicate Hoca Efendi's tapes and distribute them. We also distributed the Zaman newspaper. They sent me the Risale-i Nur collection from Türkiye, and it was an honour to have it in my home for the first time. I can't forget the spiritual joy I felt at that moment.[104]. The first Hizmet study circle in Sydney started at my home. We had no official organisations but treated every home as a centre. There weren't many people in the Hizmet Movement, but we still tried to invite others. The visits of Hizmet affiliates from Melbourne motivated us to be more active."

Bediüzzaman Said Nursi said, "Just as there is the divine blessing (karamah) of sainthood, there is also the divine blessing of sincere intention. There is the blessing of sincerity. Especially within a circle of brotherhood for the sake of Allah, sincere and serious solidarity can yield many divine blessings."[105] As you will read in the following chapters, Ebu Bekir and other Hizmet affiliates' sincerity and genuine brotherhood would lead to their success.

4.3. Ebu Bekir's Dream Comes True

Ebu Bekir once had a dream. In his dream, he was in a large conference hall preparing for an event with other Hizmet affiliates. In the dream, primarily non-Muslims attended the conference, and Ebu Bekir and Hizmet affiliates tried to convey the message of Islam to them through role modelling. Years later, when the Sufi music singer Ahmet Özhan came to Australia, they rented

104 Spiritual joy (lezzet-i maneviye) is the experience of joy and satisfaction derived from a person's inner and spiritual senses. While the brain is a physical organ and experiences material pleasure, the intellect is immaterial, and its delight comes from contemplation and meaning—both of which are spiritual in nature. Any purely abstract or non-material feelings and the pleasure they bring are referred to as spiritual joy or inner peace.
Bediüzzaman Said Nursi describes zevk-i ruhânî (the spiritual joy of the soul) as a spiritual joy attained through the path of Sufism. However, he emphasises that this pleasure is not the ultimate goal of spiritual practice but rather a byproduct of it. The true objective, he asserts, is to seek the pleasure of God and attain the truths of faith.https://sorularlarisale.com/lezzet-i-ruhani-ve-lezzet-i-manevinin-muhabbetullah-ile-munasebeti-nasildir

105 Nursi, Barla Lahikası, https://kulliyat.risaleinurenstitusu.org/barla-lahikasi/yedinci-risale-olan-yedinci-mesele/15

the large hall he had seen in his dream for a concert. Mostly non-Muslims attended the concert, which was magnificent. Ebu Bekir said, "I felt like my dream had come true."[106]

Another time, Ebu Bekir went to the mosque for Friday prayers. While the imam was delivering the sermon, He dozed off and entered a state of wakefulness. At that moment, he saw a key falling from the sky onto Türkiye. He felt that the key belonged to the Hizmet Movement and that they would open many doors with it. Returning to his normal state, he felt overwhelming spiritual joy and happiness.

Ebu Bekir worked six days a week at a butcher shop, from morning to evening. He recalled his early months and years: "In those early years, time was never enough for us. Seven days felt too short. There were a few Hizmet affiliates in Sydney and so much to do. Because of this, we often neglect our families. My wife, understandably, would complain. Once, she dreamed of the Kaa'ba and saw Hizmet affiliates in the courtyard of Kaa'ba. After that, I never heard any complaints from her. She, too, was delighted after seeing the Kaaba in her dream."

4.4. Allah's Grace and Coincidences

Ebu Bekir said, "In the first 20 years after coming to Sydney, I witnessed Allah's blessings and experienced many coincidences. For example, whenever Hizmet affiliates wanted to do something, Allah would open the doors for us, and we would succeed. If we faced a difficulty, something good would immediately follow. If we delay or neglect a duty related to the Hizmet, we will face more

106 There are numerous hadiths regarding dreams, shedding light on their role in spiritual life. To illustrate this, I will present a few narrations.

Abu Huraira (may Allah be pleased with him) reported:

"I heard the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) say, 'Nothing remains of prophethood except for glad tidings (mubashshirat).' The companions asked, 'What are glad tidings?' The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) replied, 'A righteous dream.'" (Bukhari, Ta'bir 5)

In another narration, Abu Huraira (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) said: "As the end of times approaches, a believer's dream will rarely be false, for a believer's dream is one of forty-six parts of prophethood." (Bukhari, Ta'bir 26; Muslim, Ru'ya 6) Another version recorded by Muslim states:

"The most truthful among you in speech will have the truest dreams." (Muslim, Ru'ya 11)

According to Islamic scholars, good dreams are considered a part of the spiritual life of saints and the pious. They are seen as divine inspirations, offering guidance and insight to those who live in righteousness and sincerity.

challenges. It was as if we were receiving gentle warnings. These things acted like a whip, pushing us forward."

Bediüzzaman speaks of three types of miracles in this sacred service:

1. Preparing the service and guiding those who will serve.
2. Removing obstacles, repelling harmful people, and administering justice.
3. Giving a compassionate warning to those who work sincerely in the service but become complacent so they return to the service.[107]

The sincere efforts of those years bore miraculous fruits. Bediüzzaman said, "Just as there is the divine blessing(karamah) of sainthood, there is also the divine blessing of sincere intention. There is the divine blessing of sincerity. Especially within a circle of brotherhood for the sake of Allah, sincere and serious solidarity can yield many divine blessings. Even the collective identity of such a community can attain the status of a perfect saint and become a recipient of divine grace."[108]

107 Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, Lemalar, s.52

108 Said Nursi, Barla Lahikası. https://kulliyat.risaleinurenstitusu.org/barla-lahikasi/yedinci-risale-olan-yedinci-mesele/15

The first Dersane in Sydney

4.5. The First Dersane in Sydney and Money Left in the Mailbox

Ebu Bekir recalls: "I will never forget a good incident. We rented a house (above picture) to open the first dersane in Sydney. We struggled to find the first month's rent and deposit. We had no money for furniture. Of course, we needed to furnish the dersane. Halit and I walked the streets, collecting items that had been thrown out but were still usable. It was a bit embarrassing, but we had no other choice. We washed what needed washing and repaired what needed fixing. We also bought some items very cheaply from a flea market. With these items, we furnished the first dersane. The furniture was old, but it served its purpose. Opening that first darsane made us feel excited and like we had conquered the world."

Once, they didn't have the $200 needed for the weekly rent of the house they rented. Halit and Erkam Bey, who stayed at the house, found exactly $200 in the mailbox the next day. Someone had left the money, but they didn't know who. It was exactly what was needed to pay rent. Ebu Bekir says, "We experienced many unique blessings in the early years. We saw much divine grace. All of these are worth writing in gold script."

The Prophet said, "On the Day of Judgment, when there is no other shade, Allah will shelter seven people under His Throne: ...one who gives charity so secretly that his left hand does not know what his right hand has given..."[109] Here, the meaning is to give charity secretly. "Those who spend their wealth by night and day, secretly and openly, will have their reward with their Lord. And no fear will there be concerning them, nor will they grieve" (Qur'an, 2:274). Elmalılı Hamdi Yazır explains the reason for the revelation of this verse: "It is said that Abu Bakr (r.a.) donated ten thousand of his forty thousand dinars at night, ten thousand during the day, ten thousand secretly, and ten thousand openly, and this verse was revealed about him. Ali (r.a.), who owned nothing but four dirhams of silver, donated one at night, one during the day, one secretly, and one openly."[110]

As a researcher, I found that a Hizmet affiliate from Melbourne donated a used second-hand vacuum cleaner to this first dersane in Sydney because they

109 Bukhari Hadith 1423, 6806.

110 Elmalili Hamdi Yazir Tefsiri, http://www.enfal.de/telmalili/bakara3.htm

had no money to purchase it. When Hoca Efendi came to Sydney and sat on the couch in the living room, the sofa collapsed because it was also collected from the street and was an old couch. Halit and Erkam, who were staying in dersane, were very embarrassed when the couch collapsed.

Nasreddin says, "Before opening this dersane, we gave physics and mathematics lessons to one person in a garage in Homebush for six months to prepare him for university. Later, as demand increased, we rented two classrooms at Arthur Phillip High School and voluntarily taught physics, chemistry, and mathematics to students who wanted to go to university. We saw the success of this. This success inspired us to open dormitories and dersane."

4.6. Garib's Joke Comes True

Garib was born into a religious family in a city of the southeast of Türkiye. His family, especially his grandmother, was very spiritual. Since she became blind later in life, Garib, at the age of 4-5, would hold his grandmother's hand and take her to visit her friends in the village. She often prayed, "Oh Allah, make my grant son a mufti." A hadith states, "Allah is too shy to turn down the prayer of an elderly person who clings tightly to the Sunnah/Islam."[111] Indeed, twenty years later, Garib's grandmother's prayer was accepted. He then worked as a deputy mufti in a district as a preacher.

Garib used to sleep in the same room as his grandmother. Whenever he woke up at night, he would hear her mentioning Allah or see her praying. She had a five-thousand-bead rosary about three meters long, which she used every night. After finishing primary school in the village, Garib went to the city for further education. His father enrolled him in secondary school. However, in those years, the 1970s, leftist ideology dominated almost all schools in Türkiye, and atheism was widespread among the intellectuals.

Garib's father went to his uncle's shop in the city to buy something. His uncle was a student of Risale-i Nur. When he heard Garib enroled in secondary school, he asked his father, "What are you doing? Do you want your son to be a communist? Immediately withdraw his application from

111 Kenzu'l-Ummal, 15/666.https://sorularlaislamiyet.com/%E2%80%9Cben-yaslilara-azap-etmekten%E2%80%9D-veya-%E2%80%9Cyaslilarin-duasini-geri-cevirmekten-haya-ediyorum%E2%80%9D-anlamina-0

secondary school and enrol him in the newly opened Imam Hatip school (Religious Secondary and High School)." Garib's father was unaware of the newly opened Imam Hatip school. Garib was then enrolled in the Imam Hatip school. Due to his success in his studies, he caught the attention of a teacher who was a student of Risale-i Nur. The teacher invited him and nine other students to his home on weekends to study Risale-i Nur. At that time, if the police heard about people gathering to read Risale, they would raid the place, take them to the police station, and put them on trial. This is how Garib got acquainted with Risale-i Nur. Later, he met Mahmut Allahverdi, who was Bediüzzaman Said Nursi's student and met him twice. Garib started attending Mahmut's spiritual study circle. Every weekend, 15-20 people would gather in a house to study Risale-i Nur. Garib eagerly awaited these weekend study circles because he derived spiritual pleasure from them. During those years, during the tea sessions after study, they would speak highly of Fethullah Gülen Hoca Efendi. However, 2 to 3 years later, they started saying that Fethullah Gülen was using the wrong method. They claimed he was inventing new things that were not in line with the path of Risale-i Nur. Garib later understood that Fethullah Gülen Hoca Efendi had opened dersanes for students and later a dormitory. According to them, since the Master (Bediüzzaman) did not do such a thing, what Hoca Efendi did was incorrect.

4.7. The Prophet and Bediüzzaman at the Door

When Mahmut Allahverdi first met the Bediüzzaman Said Nursi in Kastamonu, their meeting lasted 20 minutes. The Nursi said, "I accept you as my student, go and serve Islam." As a reward for this visit made for the sake of Allah, he had a life filled with service to faith and the Qur'an. Mahmut Allahverdi served religion until his last breath. It is said that when his illness worsened at home, his wife and son were with him. He told them, "Please leave the room; the Prophet and Bediüzzaman are at the door; they want to come in." His wife and son could not understand what was happening but did as he said. When they returned to the room later, they found that Mahmut Allahverdi had passed away. Garip admired Mahmut Allahverdi's knowledge while listening to his talks. Although Mahmut Allahverdi was a secondary school graduate, he spoke like a well-educated man. When asked which university he graduated from, he would reply, "The University of Risale-i Nur."

Upon his father's recommendation, Garip enrolled in the Ankara Faculty of Theology after graduating from Imam Hatip School in 1977. He graduated from the Faculty of Theology in 1982 and was appointed as a preacher to a district in the southeast. Since there was no mufti in the district, he also served as a mufti. Thus, his grandmother's prayer was accepted. Before his appointment, he met and married his wife, a Qur'an course teacher in Ankara, through an intermediary. Garip had the intention of going abroad and working as a clergy. For this, he took an exam in Ankara. Before the exam, his mother-in-law asked him, "Why are you going abroad? Where will you go?" When she married off her daughter, she insisted they stay in Ankara. However, due to the civil service laws in Türkiye, there was an obligation to serve in the east and southeast of Türkiye, so Garip served as a preacher in a district in the southeast. Garip jokingly told his mother-in-law, "I will go to Australia." He passed the exam held by the Türkiye Directory of Religious Affairs. Among forty-two people, only he was appointed to Australia, while the others were appointed to Europe. Thus, Garip's journey to Australia began with this joke coming true.

When Garip Hoca arrived in Sydney, he felt like a fish out of water. In Türkiye, while he was a preacher in Urfa Akçakale, he was very active. He taught religion classes in a high school, held hadith discussions with 5-10 people every morning in the district's largest mosque, and officially continued as a deputy mufti. He was in charge of more than sixty mosques with over 65 imams. Sometimes, he would go to villages and listen to the problems of the villagers and the imams. At that time, there was only one discussion group in the district. Once, he had to pause the discussions for some reason. Within 1-2 weeks, two tribes clashed in front of the district governor's office, and dozens of people were injured. An Arab-origin person who continued the discussions immediately called Garip Hoca. "Hocam, our spiritual study was like a lightning rod against calamities. Let's start the spiritual study as soon as possible. We paused for a while, and there is no peace in the district." In his works, Bediüzzaman Said Nursi also stated that studying Risale-i Nur, a tafsir of the Qur'an Risale-i Nur, is like a lightning rod against calamities. He expressed that when there is a pause in Risale-i Nur study, it leads to compassionate or punitive slaps, and if the state forcibly pauses the study, calamities increase in the country. Bediüzzaman said, "When those who work sincerely in service become slack, they receive a compassionate slap, wake up,

and return to service. There are more than a hundred incidents of this kind. Of twenty incidents, thirteen or fourteen received compassionate slaps, and six or seven received punitive slaps."[112]

Garib Hoca fulfilled this person's request with a heart and restarted the Islamic study circle in the mosque the next day. Garip Hoca's wife was also a Qur'an course teacher in the district. Her days were also very busy. The same was true for Garip Hoca's wife. She felt like a fish out of water, thousands of kilometres away from her family and stepping out of active service. Garip Hoca later learned that his wife cried almost daily during their first year in Sydney.

Garib Hoca did not remain idle. He first took care of a middle school and a high school student who came to the mosque. Over time, he found a few more young people and started a spiritual study group for young people on weekends. Additionally, with his limited English, Garip Hoca began teaching religion classes in local public schools. While teaching, he made many pronunciation mistakes. He also enrolled in English courses and made efforts to improve his English. Similarly, his wife started a study circle with young girls and women. Over time, the number of women she took care of increased. Some of these women later served the community voluntarily. Others became teachers and engineers, and some even became academics. Among these women, there was also an atheist. The atheist woman became a devout believer, later wore a chador, and served religion.

4.8. Hoca Efendi's Advice

Garip Hoca says, "I spared no effort in learning English, and in the end, I saw great benefits. Two things motivated me to learn English. First, after graduating from the Faculty of Theology, my goal was to pursue a doctorate. However, I couldn't do it because I didn't know English. That's when I decided to learn English. Secondly, while listening to a tape of Fethullah Gülen Hoca Efendi, he spoke about the virtues and benefits of learning a foreign language. Hoca Efendi's advice left a deep impression on me. For these two reasons, I made an effort to learn English."

Garip Hoca visited Muslim inmates in prisons and patients in hospitals. During these visits, he felt as if he was on the path to paradise and was very content with his situation. In fact, he was so busy that sometimes he didn't

112 Nursi, Lemalar, 10. Lema s.56.

have time for breakfast or lunch, running around until evening and only eating dinner. Eventually, Garip Hoca completed his six-year contract at the mosque and returned to Türkiye. Two days before returning to Türkiye, he obtained permanent residency in Australia for himself and his family. The president of the NSW Islamic Council brought him the forms, saying, "You are a diligent person who does beneficial work for the community. Why don't you apply for permanent residency?" Initially, Garip Hoca hadn't thought about applying for permanent residency. About 8-10 months before returning to Türkiye, when the president of the Islamic council asked, "What will you lose if you obtain permanent residency even if you return?" he applied to the Immigration Department for permanent residency. He received his permanent residency permit two days before returning to Türkiye.

After returning to Türkiye, Garip Hoca planned to return to Australia to pursue a master's degree. Later, if circumstances allowed, he considered pursuing a doctorate as well. However, his father and wife's family opposed their return to Australia. One day, while he was sitting with his father, the phone rang. It was Şakir, one of the young men he mentored, calling from Sydney. "Hocam, when will you come back to Australia? All the young people are waiting for you," Şakir said.

Garip Hoca turned to his father and said, "Dad, the young people in Sydney expect me to return. If you allow me, I'd like to go and stay a few more years, and I can complete my master's degree as well." His father, unable to resist his son's determination, replied, "Son, it's up to you." Garip took this as his father's consent. Since Garip's mother passed away in high school, he only sought his father's approval. When Garip told his wife's family they would return after a few years, they didn't object—perhaps reluctantly granting their permission.

The family began preparing to return to Australia. Before leaving, he had secured a part-time job as a chaplain in NSW prisons. This would provide a modest income, allowing them to live without burdening anyone. While passing through customs in Istanbul, Garip Hoca carried his permanent residency visa in his grey passport, which he had obtained as a mosque imam. His worker's passport, however, had no visa. He could have transferred the permanent residency visa from his grey passport to his worker's passport. Still, to do so, he first needed to schedule an appointment with the Australian embassy—a process that could take weeks, if not months. This delay would

mean losing the part-time job he had found in Sydney, something he was determined to avoid.

He trusted God and arrived at Istanbul Airport with his family, carrying both passports. At customs, the officer said, "Your worker's passport doesn't have a visa. Normally, I shouldn't allow you to leave. You must transfer your visa from the grey passport to your worker's passport. But you seem like a good person, so I'll make an exception and let you through."

4.9. Wash Your Hands Before Abortion!

Once, while teaching a religion class at a high school in Mascot, where boys and girls studied together, Garip Hoca made an amusing language mistake. His English was limited, so he always prepared for his lessons in advance. On that particular day, he was explaining the concept of ablution when he mixed up two English words: "ablution" and "abortion," which sound somewhat similar. As he described the process of performing ablution, he accidentally said to the students, "Wash your hands before abortion," instead of "Before ablution."

The students burst into laughter. Garip Hoca, realising he had made a mistake, turned to a Turkish student in the class and asked, "Why is everyone laughing?"

The student explained, "'Teacher, you confused the pronunciation of 'abortion' with 'ablution.' Instead of telling the students to wash their hands before starting ablution, you told them to wash their hands before starting an abortion."

Garip Hoca understood the mix-up and corrected himself. Smiling at his mistake, he thought, I will never forget the difference between these two words for the rest of my life.

Despite his limited English, Garip Hoca was actively participating in his language classes. He spoke as much as possible, even if he made mistakes, and practised with non-Turkish Muslims at the mosque. He never let his errors discourage him; instead, he saw them as steps toward improvement.

He recalls one memorable experience: "It was the holy month of Ramadan. I had enrolled in an English course in downtown Sydney. The class ended about 40 to 45 minutes before the tarawih prayer during Ramadan. I would miss the isha and special Tarawih prayers if I waited for the bus. My only option was to run to the mosque. While running, I would break my fast with the dates and snacks I had brought. I was drenched in sweat when I arrived at the mosque.

Still, I would lead the night and Tarawih prayers without a single complaint."

Garip Hoca's dedication to learning and light-hearted approach to mistakes made him a beloved figure among his students and a lifelong learner of English.

4.10. The Secret at the Hospital: Ömer's Unknown Wet Nurse

Ömer was born in 1955 at Etfal Hospital in Sarıyer, Istanbul. One day, he heard a mysterious story from his mother. She told him:

"When I was pregnant with you, I was unwell. Because of this, your father insisted on taking me to the hospital. First, he brought me from the village to Sarıyer by a fishing boat, then by car to Etfal Hospital. On the day you were born, you cried a lot. I was too sick to breastfeed you. At that moment, a woman came to the door, entered the room, and said, 'My dear, give me your baby, I will nurse him.' She breastfed you, and you stopped crying and fell asleep. She came once more to nurse you again."

Curious, Ömer asked, "Mother, who was my wet nurse? Do you know her address?" His mother replied, "On the fourth day, when your father came to take us home, he brought fish for the doctors. I told him, 'There was a woman in the next room who breastfed our baby twice. I want to thank her, say goodbye, and ask for her blessing.' I handed you to your father and went to the next room, but no one was there. I asked the nurse in charge about the woman, and she said, 'There hasn't been anyone else giving birth in that room. It's been empty for days.' I've thought about it ever since, but I never found her. I always wondered who she was. So, my son, I do not know who your wet nurse was."

Ömer's mother was deeply religious. During his childhood, she recited prayers for him daily, and he received many blessings from her. Ömer recalls, "Once, I left the house without receiving her prayer, and that day, I was stung by a bee. My mother was a blessed woman. My parents performed their prayers regularly and recited the Quran on Friday evenings. My siblings and I also read the Quran. I attended Quran courses at the mosque.

One day, while studying at the mosque, two gendarmes arrived and spoke with the imam. Afterwards, the imam sent us home. We later learned that the Jacobin state secular authorities didn't want the Quran to be taught at mosques. As far as I remember, this happened in 1962 or 1963, two or three years after the 1960 coup. They had banned Quranic teachings in mosques."

During the turbulent years of 1978 and 1979, Türkiye was plagued by

terrorism. In Ömer's neighbourhood, nationalist groups held power. His family was forced to pay them monthly protection money. Failure to comply resulted in death threats. Ömer recalls, "At that time, my sister was in Australia. I decided to move there. My sister helped me, and I met my future wife when she visited Türkiye. We got married and arrived in Australia on March 11, 1980. The very next day, I started working. I've been working ever since.

In Australia, I started the doner kebab business. I opened several doner shops and managed a production facility. I didn't speak English initially, but my wife helped me. Eventually, I established my own business, opening and running around a dozen doner shops before selling them. I believe all my successes are blessings from God. Although now retired, I still work occasionally when opportunities arise."

4.11. Ömer's Remarkable Memory

Curious about an intriguing story, I asked Ömer, "I heard something about you that I'd like to confirm. Before meeting affiliates from the Hizmet Movement, you were delivering doner kebabs to snowy mountain regions. While driving home in your minibus, exhausted, you dozed off. Then, a figure appeared and woke you up. If not for that, you might have had an accident and died. Is this true?"

Ömer responded, "I used to deliver doner to remote areas during winter. I would wake up early, pick up orders from the Flemington market, deliver doners around Sydney, and then head to the snowy mountains by noon. After the deliveries, I would return the same day because I had to work the next morning. The round trip took 12-13 hours.

One snowy night, I was extremely tired. Snowfall continued all the way to Canberra. While driving on the highway, I struggled to keep my eyes open. At one point, I drifted off and veered towards the barrier. Just then, I saw a figure on the barrier, nudging me. I woke up, grabbed the steering wheel, and managed to get back on the road. After driving a bit further, I found a rest stop and slept briefly.

I have a peculiar trait—if I see someone or hear a voice that resonates with me, it becomes etched in my memory. Even after 20 years, I can recall it vividly. About two or three years later, Garip Hoca contacted me to meet some university students from Türkiye in Sydney. I invited them over. Garip, Alican, Halit, and Erkam visited me at my home. We had tea, shared a meal, and engaged in spiritual conversation. I asked Halit various questions, which he answered convincingly.

At that time, I knew nothing about the Hizmet Movement. They asked me questions, and I responded candidly. Impressed by my answers, they asked, 'Mr. Ömer, what is your educational background?' I replied, 'I graduated from Yavuz Pasha as a joke.' Interestingly, before Garip called me, I dreamed that four people visited my home, and we had a wonderful discussion. I remember thinking, 'What wonderful Muslims they are.' When Garip and his friends arrived, I realised my dream had come true."

After bidding farewell to the guests, Ömer Bey stood for a long time, watching them leave. His wife, Rana, asked him, "What are you looking at? Come inside already." Ömer replied, "I have something to tell you. Believe me and bear witness. These guests who visited us will accomplish what they spoke about here." Halit and Alican had mentioned their plans to establish dormitories and schools in Sydney.

Ömer occasionally visited Turkish coffee shops in Redfern and Auburn. The same people who played games in the coffee houses would be in the front rows at the mosque on Fridays. Even those who cursed at each other while playing games would be in the front rows at the mosque. Ömer thought to himself, "My God, what kind of Islam is this? Have a non-Islamic life, then come to the mosque and stand in the front row for prayer. I had never seen such a thing in Türkiye." This situation showed him that Ömer was searching for true Islam.

Ömer had a very strong social side. He was in contact with almost all political, social and faith groups in the Turkish community. It didn't matter to him if they were right-wing, left-wing, Alevi, or Sunni. He tried to help everyone, which made him well-liked by the community. Additionally, when community organisations held picnics or other events, he would provide free döner kabab meat. It didn't matter to him if the organisations were right-wing, left-wing, or other associations. He helped everyone, not just Turks but also other Muslims and non-Muslims.

Halit would occasionally visit him at his workplace and have tea or coffee together. After a short while, Halit called him one day and said, "Ömer Bey, we are going on a trip to Melbourne. Would you like to join us?" Ömer agreed, saying, "Sure, I'll come." Halit called him the day before, and they set off for Melbourne the next day. Initially, Rana was not pleased with Ömer leaving his wife and children in Sydney to go to Melbourne. Let's hear the rest from Rana:

"When Ömer left the house, I felt a beautiful fragrance in our home. It was like the scent of paradise. I had never felt such a fragrance before." During the day, when Rana opened the door, a bird resembling a dove entered. She had never seen such a bird before. The bird stayed inside for a while, showing no fear or hesitation. Later, when she opened the door, it flew away. Even when Rana got into the car to take the children somewhere or go shopping, she could still smell that beautiful paradise scent from the house. After this mysterious and very interesting spiritual experience, Rana became more accepting of her husband's dedication to the Hizmet Movement.

4.12. Who Touched My Shoulder?

Ömer attended a board of trustee meeting of Feza Foundation at the dormitory opened in Mascot. Halit gave Ömer two video cassettes that evening, saying, "These are our Hoca Efendi's tapes." Ömer recounts: "I took the tapes home. It was around 10 PM. My wife and children were asleep. I started watching one of the video tapes. While watching, it felt as if someone touched my shoulder and asked, 'Do you know this person?' I immediately stopped the video and looked around but saw no one. Of course, I started thinking. Then, it occurred to me that the person who had saved me from an accident by standing on the barrier was Hoca Efendi. It was very late at night. I called Halit, crying. After that, I transformational experienced some changes in my life. I cried more often. Even my mother would read prayers over me, asking, 'Son, what's happening to you?' Some family members were also worried about my condition. I would suddenly feel strange and start crying at their presence."

4.13. The Man Who Cried for a Tree

Ömer felt spiritual changes within himself. But at first, he couldn't share his troubles with anyone. He recounts: "Sometimes I would go to a park near our house and talk to a tree there. I went almost every week. Of course, I would tell the tree my troubles. I felt that the tree was listening to me. After a long time, one day, I went to see the tree. I felt that the tree had also cried a lot. Its branches were drooping, and its leaves had fallen to the ground. Seeing the tree in this state made me very sad. After some time, when I went to see the tree again, I saw that it had been cut down. After that, I never went to that park again because remembering the tree made me sad." Hoca Efendi says, "A person's share of faith is proportional to their love and compassion for

creatures. It can be said that faith and compassion are directly proportional."[113] Ömer's spiritual changes would eventually settle, and he would continue to strive on the righteous path. He would dedicate himself to serving humanity, both with his wealth and life, to prevent young people from going astray.

During my visit for the interview, I saw Ömer and his wife live in granny flat. In the last thirty years, he donated hundreds of thousands of dollars for educational purposes. Now the couple lives in a bedroom granny flat and have a simple life. He could have a villa near the sea with the money he donated. However, he has chosen a simple life full of spiritual pleasure. I believe he is a role model now but will inspire future generations with his dedication to education and the betterment of society.

4.14. Reyhan Baba, the Sage of Denizli

When one thinks of Reyhan Baba, the name Rahmi Çetiner from Denizli (a city in the west of Türkiye) comes to the minds of the Hizmet affiliates in Sydney. He earned the nickname "Reyhan Baba" because he would bring the basil he grew in his garden to every gathering he attended. In the early 1990s, he took over a butcher shop in Eastlakes. Before opening the shop, he approached Garip Hoca, the imam of Redfern Mosque, and said, "Hocam, I want to inspect the slaughterhouses where I will buy meat to ensure they follow halal practices. Will you come with me?" Garip Hoca agreed and visited the slaughterhouses in Orange and Dubbo together. After these inspections, he opened his butcher shop with peace of mind. The late Rahmi Çetiner was very humble. Once, when Garip Hoca asked him a question, he replied, "Hocam, I only know Denizli ascent in Turkish language," showing his humility according to Turkish culture.

His close friend, Ebu Bekir, recounts: "While working at Rahmi Çetiner's butcher shop, it also became a place where we duplicated cassette tapes. At that time, we had a device where we placed a blank tape on one side and a full tape on the other to duplicate them. We would learn by listening to the tapes ourselves. Rahmi Çetiner was full of energy; he worked all day and, despite his exhaustion, would attend evening study circles and board of trustee meetings. Sometimes, he would take a short nap in the back of the car. He maintained his direction until his last breath. Even when he was ill, he gave us positive energy

113 Personal communication

during our visits. Although he had cancer and knew his days were numbered, I never saw any fear of death in him. His resources were limited, but he always gave beyond his means. I can say that he was one of the first board of trustees in Sydney. He was meticulous about his prayers and very sensitive about halal and haram. When guests came from outside, we would especially take them to his house because there were not many people, we could take guests to."

Reyhan Baba visited and listened to Hoca Efendi's talks and sermon when he came to Sydney. He worked six days a week from 7 AM to 7 PM. After work, he would go home, take a shower, eat, and then attend gatherings or trustee meetings. Mikail shared his thoughts about him: "We were neighbours with Rahmi Çetiner in Eastlakes. Because he was exhausted, we would take him in our car to the meetings. He would sleep in the car on the way there and back due to exhaustion. Despite this, I can't remember him missing any study circles or trustee meetings in the evening. He was old but always ran around like a young man in the Hizmet. At Turkish community meetings, such as festivals, he would say, 'Give me the job of collecting trash,' and he would do it gladly."

When Haşim abi visited, he stayed at Rahmi Çetiner's house. Rahmi Çetiner bought a house in 1982, and despite having the means, he did not acquire worldly possessions. He focused on his children's education and did not concern himself with worldly matters. After covering his expenses, he donated much of his earnings to educational institutions and provided scholarships to poor students. Mikail said, "Four or five days before his death, Rahmi Çetiner attended the Eid al-Adha festival. That day, he told us he had collected over thirty qurbans for poor Africans." He was meticulous about halal and haram and spent about ten per cent of his annual income, four times the amount of zakat he was required to give on educational activities and scholarships for poor students.

As far as I know, he was a primary school graduate. He had cancer, but his spirit was vibrant. Garip Hoca said, "When I went to South Africa for a conference last year, I remembered Reyhan Baba's dedication to work for the poor better. Even in South Africa, the most developed country in Africa, nearly sixty per cent of people live in tin houses. Imagine the situation in other African countries. For the past hundred years, Africans have seen missionaries distributing aid. Thanks to people like Rahmi Çetiner, they have also seen Muslims doing good, even if only a little. Yes, it wasn't the two kilos of meat distributed, but seeing white Muslims among them gave them hope for the future."

Reyhan Baba worked tirelessly until his death so that others' children could be educated. He would say to Garip Hoca, "Hocam, I don't know much. I only know Denizli ascent in Turkish." God protected his children, and they all received a good education. They now serve as exemplary Muslim doctor and businessmen in Australia.

According to his friends, he always talked about Hizmet and how to help others. Despite having cancer, Rahmi Çetiner never deviated from his goal of serving humanity until his last breath. Garip Hoca said:

"I liken Rahmi Çetiner to an elderly companion who wanted to go to war during the time of Hazrat Omar. He was like his shadow. When a call for jihad was made in Medina, this elderly companion also wanted to join the campaign. Commander Sa'd Ibn Abi Waqqas tried to prevent him from joining because he was very old. The elderly companion said, 'O Sa'd, does not Allah say in the Quran: "O believers! Mobilize for battle, whether you are light or heavy, and strive with your wealth and your lives in the cause of Allah. That is best for you, if only you knew." (Tawbah: 41) What does this mean? Isn't it a verse that calls for everyone, young and old, to participate?' He was allowed to join when he insisted and went as far as Damascus. According to one narration, he was martyred there while fighting[114]. In the commentary on this verse, the great Islamic scholar Elmalılı Hamdi Yazır wrote: 'Therefore, when it is said, "Mobilize for Allah," immediately gather and mobilize, whether light or heavy, in whatever state you are in, whether it is easy or difficult for you, young or old, single or married, unemployed or busy, poor or rich, infantry or cavalry, whether with heavy or light weapons, whatever your situation and weaponry, all of you who can participate in the war, mobilize without delay, strive with your wealth and your lives. Those who can participate with both wealth and life should do so with both, those who can only participate with wealth should do so with wealth, and those who can only participate with life should do so with life to the extent of their ability. All of you participate in jihad together. Such a comprehensive jihad is better for you; it is entirely good if you know. If you have the ability and sense to know what goodness is, know that this is good for you. If you know, you will rush to jihad.'"[115]

114 At-Tabari, Jamiul Bayan, https://www.altafsir.com/Tafasir.asp?tMadhNo=1&tTafsirNo=1&tSoraNo=9&tAyahNo=41&tDisplay=yes&UserProfile=0&LanguageId=1

115 Elmalılı Hamdi Yazır, Hak Dini Kuran Dili. http://www.enfal.de/telmalili/tevbe.htm

4.14. A Poem by Ebu Bekir in Memory of the Late Rahmi Çetiner

A Friend

I met a friend on this strange continent

A friend who endured the pains of the early days of service

Whatever he had in his hands, his home, and his heart

He never let down those who sought help, perhaps many times

His loved ones called him Reyhan Baba in conversation

For he was the fragrance of beautiful days every time

Now, as we smell his basil, he remains in the memories of every lover

Or, as Cemil, he stayed in the circle of those days of service

Yes, Rahmi Çetiner did not live for himself. He lived for the happiness of others. Let's conclude this topic with the words of the master of speech: "Living for the good of others without thinking of one's interests elevates humanity to the highest point. The revival of a society is possible through the efforts of self-sacrificing people. Those who sacrifice their happiness for the happiness of others are true examples of humanity." Reyhan Baba became a model.

4.17. Tahir's Tears

Tahir migrated to Australia with his family when he was 8 years old. His friends said his father loved social activities and had strong national feelings. He also loved helping people. Tahir received a good upbringing from his family. He completed his primary, secondary, high school, and university education in Sydney, excelling. He recounts how he met the people in the Hizmet movement: "I once attended a talk by Garip Hoca at the Redfern Mosque. After experiencing the spiritual atmosphere there, I regularly attended these meetings. However, I soon went to Türkiye and married a non-practising Muslim woman, which prevented me from attending the spiritual talks for about two years." Garip Hoca did not lose contact with Tahir and later visited him at his home, aiming to help Tahir, who was having marital issues. Although he could not save their marriage, Tahir never lost contact with his long-time friend Enes.

Tahir explains: "Enes, a close friend I had known since I was 15, invited me to a meeting one day. I thought he was inviting me to another of Garip Hoca's talks. It turned out to be the first fundraising meeting for building a school. At my first meeting, hearing the contributions from the young friends brought tears to my eyes. I had only ever given $10 or $20 for Eid prayers at the mosque. Yet, these student friends, who were not even working, were pledging $1,000 or $2,000. I was almost bankrupt at the time, but inspired by their altruism, I pledged $2,000. I had no money to give, but I told myself, 'I made a promise, I have to keep it.' I sold some household items to pay the amount I had pledged."

One day, Garip Hoca met Tahir's father, who said, "What did you do to my son to make him so generous? We used to go to the mosque together for Eid prayer, and he would give at most $10 or $20 as charity. But he pledged $2,000 for the school project and sold his household items to pay it." Tahir's father was thrilled with this change in his son. Tahir saw that his friends in Hizmet prayed five times a day, but initially, he only observed them. Over time, he felt inspired and began praying five times daily, never abandoning his prayers thereafter.

Tahir maintained his connection with his friends in Hizmet, generously mobilising his resources yearly to help establish schools. Being with them marked a turning point in his life. Tahir recounts: "I was working at Optus phone company at the time. I tried to fit in with my colleagues and managers by socialising like them, but I couldn't win their approval despite my efforts. Later, thanks to my friends in Hizmet, I found myself and began living as a practising Muslim. This earned my manager's trust. The CEO of the company trusted me greatly. In later years, when a major agreement was to be made between Optus and a large American company, the CEO sent me to finalise the deal. Being with my friends in Hizmet and participating in the trustee board helped develop some of my abilities over time." The CEO was right to trust him because he knew Tahir was honest. Tahir even refused a small gift from the company he made a deal with within the US, considering it a bribe.

Tahir participated in social activities as much as his time allowed, never missed religious talks and continually improved his religious knowledge. After divorcing his first wife, a non-practice woman, he married someone who matched his character and prayed five times daily. Together, they worked to benefit humanity, opening their home and making financial sacrifices. They

volunteered day and night to keep young people away from all kinds of evil. However, their efforts would not go unnoticed, and some would become disturbed by their work. At one point, some people would view them as terrorists and treat them as such. Despite these obstacles, they would not be deterred from serving the community. You will read about his volunteer work and his challenges in the following chapters. You might even say, "How could this happen?" when you learn about the treatment they received despite their contributions to humanity. However, like those who served humanity and religion in the past, they faced similar challenges.

4.18. What Captivated Abdülhalim

Abdülhalim was born in Australia in 1971 and completed his primary, secondary, high school, and university education in NSW. He started working as a computer engineer at a young age and later completed a master's degree at the University of Wollongong. Abdülhalim explains how he met the people in Hizmet: "Our first meeting happened when a few friends came to Wollongong. They were doing their master's at the University of Wollongong. There was Alican, then Hakkı, and a few other friends. We were university students at the time. I was in my final year or maybe my third or fourth year. We met these friends who had just come from Türkiye, and that's how I first got acquainted with Hizmet."

When asked when he became a board member of Feza Foundation, Abdülhalim replied: "Interestingly, in 1994, I was staying at the dormitory in Mascot. What resonated most with me and was very convincing was Hizmet's focus on education. I had previously been involved with different communities, attended Esat Hoca Efendi's community camps, and been part of the Milli Görüş community, among others. But when my friends in Hizmet emphasised education, it made a lot of sense. Having experienced the education system in Australia and seen firsthand the deficiencies in public schools, especially in immigrant areas, I understood the importance of education. At that time, I saw that very few Turkish-origin youth were studying at the universities. By questioning why this was the case, I grasped the importance of education. When the Hizmet affiliates emphasised education, it seemed logical and correct. Therefore, I wanted to lead in education within a community for the sake of Allah. As I got to know the friends and saw their qualities, I became more convinced that this was the right path for me, so I joined Hizmet."

Another thing that captivated Abdülhalim was the altruism made by the Hizmet affiliates Halit, Erkam, and Alican. Reflecting on those days, he said: "Yes, I remember. Especially Halit Abi made great sacrifices. We shared a room in the dormitory, and he always guided us, helping with our education and personal development. He also took a personal interest in middle school students, treating them with kindness and tolerance. Halit Abi made significant contributions to our education. Similarly, Alican Hocam was very valuable. Erkam Abi was disciplined and uncompromising in his altruism, but he also knew how to build good relationships with people. Alican Hocam taught me the importance of action in the Hizmet. He guided us in organising programs, bringing different people together, and broadening our vision. Thanks to these affiliates, we learned to contribute more to the Hizmet."

Allah's first command to humanity is "Read."(Qur'an, 96:1) The Prophet said, "Whoever desires this world should seek knowledge, whoever desires the hereafter should seek knowledge, and whoever desires both should seek knowledge."[116] Hoca Efendi said, "The true power of a nation is not its armies, weapons, or economy, but its educated human potential." Abdülhalim became a board member of Feza Foundation in 1995 and has continued almost without interruption. He has worked on significant projects in educational services, business, and dialogue activities. His financial sacrifices are particularly unforgettable. You will read about his contributions in these areas in the next chapter.

4.19. Erkam's Dream

Erkam migrated to Australia at the end of 1991. His goal was to study, but he was unsure if he could achieve it, experiencing moments of doubt. His move to Australia was facilitated by the Hizmet Movement, which provided logistical support. Before arriving, he spoke with Halit Bey on the phone, who gave him the address of the house he would be staying at. Erkam recalls, "I will never forget, it was 20 Leonard Street. But on the plane, I kept thinking to myself. I was only given the street number, not the apartment number because, in Türkiye, addresses usually include both. I wondered how I would find the place if no one came to pick me up. I was filled with excitement and worry about finding this incomplete address. It was also my first time travelling abroad,

116 Tirmidhi, Davaat, 68.

adding to my excitement. I landed at the airport at 5 AM and saw Halit and Ebu Bekir Bey waiting at the gate. Their early morning arrival made me very happy, and I thought to myself, 'Whatever these friends do, I forgive all past and future grievances.'"

When I arrived, the Hizmet affiliates had already prepared a room for me in the dersane. I came to a furnished place at 20 Leonard Street, but I remember the house being very old. It was so old that only one or two people would come to the house at that time. Everything in the house was very old. One of the friends who visited even refused to eat with us. When I asked why, he said too many cockroaches were crawling around. That was the state of the house."

Erkam was very meticulous about cleanliness and took great care of the guests. He ensured everything in the house was in its place and tried to offer whatever he could to every visitor. Once, an Australian named Ahmet Sadık, who had converted to Islam after seeing the Prophet in his dream, visited the house and told Erkam, "I see the spirituality of Said Nursi here." Just as Yunus Emre matured in Taptuk's lodge, life in the dersane and its activities helped Erkam grow spiritually.

When Hoca Efendi visited Sydney, Erkam stayed in the room he used and considered it an honour to use the bed and blanket he had used. When Halit Bey had to return to Türkiye, he asked Erkam to take over his spiritual talks. This was a significant motivation for Erkam and helped him develop himself, although he never saw himself as sufficient. Erkam says, "I tried my best despite being inexperienced. Sometimes, Ebu Bekir Bey would fill in my gaps. Different groups attended the talks, some of whom were more pious and knowledgeable. I was amazed that they came to my talks." Years later, Erkam realised this was a blessing of personal spirituality.

Kamil, a student at NSW University, would sometimes bring Bosnian children to the dersane, where he would teach Islam and have a meal with them. Thus, people of all ages attended Erkam Bey's talks. If he had not continued the talks entrusted to him by Halit Bey, the group might have dispersed, and it would have been challenging to bring them back together. However, according to Erkam Bey, the backbone of the talks was Ebu Bekir Bey, who invited and gathered the people.

4.20. The Book That Made Hakan Cry

Hakan was born in Türkiye and completed his primary and secondary education in Denizli before migrating to Australia with his family. He later earned a bachelor's degree in science and a master's degree in information technology. Hakan describes how he first encountered the Hizmet Movement:

"My affiliation to Hizmet Movement is quite interesting. My friend Nasreddin's father loved reading books. One day, he took a book from his collection and gave it to me, saying, 'Read this. You will like it.' The book was 'Bediüzzaman Said Nursi: Unknown Aspects.' It contained some pictures of him. Until then, I did not know Bediüzzaman. I read a few pages every evening and became emotional, often crying. I regretted not knowing about this great person earlier."

While studying at university, Hakan attended talks at the Redfern Mosque with Nasreddin. He enjoyed both the talks and the çiğ köfte served afterwards. He also participated in camps organised by the youth of Redfern Mosque. Later, he met Halit, who had come from Türkiye. Hakan recounts: "Halit Bey was both a PhD student and a devout person. It was rare to find a devout person from the educated segment of the Turkish community at that time. We started meeting occasionally. I told him about the book 'Bediüzzaman Said Nursi: Unknown Aspects' and shared its content with him. He loved it. Later, I started visiting the dormitory he had opened and even stayed there sometimes." Halit began telling me about Bediüzzaman Said Nursi and his works. I became very emotional as I listened to the struggles Nursi faced and his efforts for faith and the Quran. He then showed me Bediüzzaman's works. I read them but couldn't understand much because the language was difficult, and my Turkish was insufficient. I still didn't fully understand what Hizmet was. Later, Halit Bey gave us a cassette of Hoca Efendi's talk, 'The Revival of Islam.' My father and I listened to it in the car, and we both cried." Halit later took Hakan on a trip to Melbourne, where he introduced him to Hizmet affiliates there.

Once, after a talk at the Redfern Mosque, the imam told the young attendees, "Dear Friends, you have attended many spiritual talks so far and gained knowledge. From now on, we will work on improving our Quran recitation. You should reach a level where you can give a sermon for Friday prayers. You should strive to be able to teach religion classes in schools. You will also lead Friday prayers in some schools." This was a great goal for them.

Hakan recalls, "During those years, there were attempts to lead Friday prayers for Muslim students in some schools. Later, at a youth camp, we learned the fiqh of prayer from Garip Hoca. We also learned the details of Friday prayers, such as its obligatory, necessary, and recommended aspects, and the prayers to be recited."

Hakan later started leading Friday prayers for Muslim students at a public high school and teaching religion classes to Muslim children in middle and high schools. He greatly enjoyed these voluntary services and derived spiritual pleasure from them. Bediüzzaman said, "Allah, in His infinite generosity, has placed the reward of service within the service itself. The reward of an action is embedded within the action itself."[117]

4.21. Hakan's Meeting with Hoca Efendi

Hakan recounts how he met Hoca Efendi: "In 1992, when Hoca Efendi came to Sydney, he had a sermon at Auburn Gallipoli Mosque. However, I couldn't attend to his sermon because I was leading Friday prayer elsewhere. After finishing the prayer, I quickly went to Gallipoli Mosque, hoping to catch his sermon. When I arrived, Hoca Efendi was leaving the mosque. Halit Bey introduced me to him. Hoca Efendi asked me a few questions, and I told him I was a university student with two courses left. He prayed for me and then kissed my forehead.[118] This was a great honour for me. Islamic scholars categorize kissing into five types: 'kissing out of love, mercy, compassion, respect, and desire.' They state that if done for the sake of Allah, all are considered acts of worship, and kissing children is seen as an act of mercy. The Prophet used to kiss his grandchildren on their foreheads, which boosts children's self-confidence[119].

Kissing a fellow believer's forehead is permissible. We want to document this permissibility with two examples. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) met his cousin Ja'far ibn Abi Talib upon his return from a journey. When he came near, the Prophet embraced and kissed him on the forehead.

117 Nursi, Lemalar, 17. Lema, Sekizinci Nota, s.127

118 This is considered the sunnah of the Prophet.

119 İbrahim Canan, Kütüb-i Sitte Tercüme ve Şerhiö Sorularla İslamiyet, https://sorularlaislamiyet.com/peygamber-efendimizin-torunlari-hz-hasan-ve-hz-huseyini-opmesi-ile-ilgili-hadisleri-nasil-anlamak

When the Prophet (peace be upon him) passed away, Abu Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) came to the house of the Prophet, uncovered his face, kissed his forehead, and said, 'O Messenger of Allah, you are as beautiful in death as you were in life,' and wept.[120]

Hakan's introduction to Hizmet has a backstory. While attending talks at Redfern Mosque, he once asked the speaker, 'Hocam, you will return to Türkiye. How and where should we do da'wah?' The mosque's imam replied, 'Friends, yes, I will leave you and return to Türkiye. Consult your hearts and join the community or faith group closest to you.' Some young attendees joined different spiritual orders. After meeting Halit Bey, Hakan found the Hizmet that suited his nature. He started visiting the dersane where Halit stayed and sometimes spent weekends there. Initially, his mother was not pleased with him staying at Halit Bey's house on weekends.

When Hoca Efendi visited, Hakan also stayed at the dersane that night. Hakan recounts: 'There were so many people in the house that I couldn't even find a bed. Hoca Efendi didn't speak after the night prayer and went to his room. At one point during the night, Hoca Efendi came out. Since the house was full of people, I came face to face with him again. At that moment, I was washing dishes, trying to be extremely careful not to make any noise.' This is how Hakan's journey in Hizmet began. In the coming years, he would play significant roles in community service both in Australia and abroad, making great sacrifices. In the following chapters, you will read more about Hakan's enjoyable memories related to Hizmet.

4.22. Alican's Fulfilled Prayer

Alican was born in Türkiye in 1967. While working as a research assistant at a university in Türkiye, he received a scholarship for a PhD program abroad and came to Australia in 1993. Let's hear from him how he came and what he found: "In February 1993, at the former building of Zaman newspaper in Istanbul, I was working as an assistant and also had a role at the newspaper. Once a month, we had education-related meetings with certain trustee boards in Istanbul. If Hoca Efendi was there, he would also attend. That meeting was special for me because the elder of Hizmet affiliates were present. While waiting in the corridor with Sait Bey, the coordinator of Hizmet in Istanbul, a

120 M. Asım Köksal, İslam Tarihi, Köksal Yayıncılık: 8/285-286.

friend of my age came out of our elder's room. Sait Bey told me, 'This is Halit, and he is going to Australia.' Until that day, I had never heard anything about Hizmet in Australia. I thought this young friend must be more sincere than me to be sent first. I prayed to Allah to grant me the same opportunity. About two months later, the Higher Education Council announced an exam to send students abroad for PhD studies. I was fortunate to pass the exam. At that time, YÖK allowed students to choose their preferred country. This was a great opportunity to consult Hoca Efendi. Some were going to America, some to Canada, and other countries. Japan was also an option. However, they wanted me to go to Australia."

Alican had a very active life in Istanbul. He never forgot the altruism he saw from his elder Hizmet affiliates. He recounts one memory: "Being in Istanbul was a unique experience. On the one hand, I was a research assistant at the university; on the other, I worked part time at the Zaman newspaper. Our days and nights were filled with various programs. We witnessed great altruism from Hizmet elders. I will never forget that we had consultations with Haşim abi Abi that lasted two days. Sometimes, he would ask for a 10-15 minute break to take a nap because he slept very little or not at all at night. After a short nap, we would continue the meetings. I observed altruisms from seniors like him. They became role models for us. When I remember Haşim abi Abi's altruism, my eyes still fill with tears."

A few days before going to Australia, Alican visited Hoca Efendi, who was staying on the fifth floor in Altunizade at that time. Alican recounts: "In the fifth-floor living room, there was a globe map on the right side of where he sat. Hoca Efendi asked me, 'Do you know where you are going?' I replied, 'I just heard about it; I am going to Australia, insha'Allah.' He smiled and pointed to Australia on the globe. Later, when things calmed down, he asked me, 'Have you met anyone there?' I told him I had spoken with Halit Bey. Then, Hoca Efendi said, 'When you go there, you will stay at Garib Hoca's house for about a month.' Indeed, when I arrived in Australia, I stayed at Garib Hoca's house. After arrival, I looked for a house to rent but found one only after about a month." Alican initially thought there were established Hizmet institutions in Australia.

Alican recounts: "Before coming to Australia, we heard much about Central Asia. We heard about the altruism of Hizmet affiliates and the institutions they established. I thought we had dersanes, dormitories, and

schools in Australia. However, when I arrived, I saw there were no schools. This was a disappointment for me. At that time, there were no institutions yet." According to Ebu Bekir, when Alican first arrived in Australia, he dreamed of seeing a school opening in Sydney three years later. This dream came true approximately three years later.

Alican enrolled for a PhD at the University of Wollongong and moved there. However, he would visit the 45 nearby döner kebab shops day and night. Ebu Bekir, who knows Alican well, says: "After Alican arrived, Hizmet activities for small businesspeople doubled in a short time.

Alican recounts: "I was going to study at the University of Wollongong, so I moved there. While there, three days a week or three nights, we would visit the Turks in the döner caravans. There were exactly 45 Turkish döner caravans. We would visit almost all of them three nights a week. They belonged to different communities, but they enjoyed our visits. They even expressed that our visits spiritually strengthened them. Honestly, it was a great thing for those friends to maintain their faith under those conditions, as döner caravans were generally opened around nightclubs to make money." Alican's visits had a positive impact on both the owners of doner kabab shops and himself. These visits gave him hope for the future because, ultimately, the financial burden would fall on these small business communities if an educational institution were established. Alican discovered that this potential existed among the shopkeepers.

4.23: Your Mother Will Feed You at the Mosque

Şakir migrated to Australia from Karaman with his family when he was a three-month-old baby. He completed his primary, secondary, high school, and university education in Sydney. Şakir loved Australian football. He once broke his nose while playing. His parents prayed five times a day and tried to practise their religion. They were also honest in their work. They strived to ensure their children received both religious and secular education, and they succeeded. Almost all their children went to university and found jobs. Due to his nature and the upbringing, he received from his family, Şakir tried to practice his religion. While studying at Randwick Boys High School, he facilitated Friday prayers for the students. Due to his efforts, 80-85% of the Muslim students at the school performed Friday prayers. Friday prayers continued to be held at this school for years. This model was later adopted by other high schools as well in Sydney.

He had previously taken Quran lessons from imams who had worked at Redfern Mosque. In April 1987, Garip Hoca was appointed as the mosque's imam and began to engage closely with the youth and their problems. Şakir recounts: "Garip Hoca would take young people to a park near the mosque on weekends, and we would play football. During halftime, he would gather us, read 3-5 hadiths, and give a short commentary. I don't remember the exact hadith, but I was very impressed when a hadith was read. Later, I started attending the talks held at the mosque on Friday and Saturday evenings. There was a lovely spiritual atmosphere in the talks. Once, we were expecting guests at our house on a Saturday evening. My mother told me, 'Son, don't go to tonight's talk and serve the guests at home.' But I wanted to attend the talk at the mosque. I insisted on this to my mother. Seeing that I wouldn't change my mind, my mother said, 'Go, go, as if your mother will feed you at the mosque.'"

Şakir also explains how he got involved in the Hizmet: "We used to attend talks at Redfern Mosque. I think Garip Hoca or someone else brought a video cassette, and we watched it. In the video, a crying Hoca was speaking in Turkish. Our Turkish wasn't very good, but the video was impactful. He was preaching about the rights of parents. His Turkish was very deep and heavy, but it would have been impactful even if he hadn't cried. I remember that moment. Besides that, there were a few young brothers from Melbourne who also gave us talks. I remember meeting Risale-i Nur. When Ahmet Veli Hoca came, he gave a talk. He explained the wisdom of the Battle of Uhud, why they lost, and what the wisdoms were. I remember that talk at Redfern Mosque. Another Hizmet affiliate was Haşim abi. He visited our mosque and impressed me a lot. His tesbihat (invocation after salat) was also impressive. I remember the first time we met. Later, I went to the dersane where Halit and Erkam stayed. Shortly after the dersane opened, Hoca Efendi came from Türkiye, and I attended his talks there. We were impressed. Yes, besides that, I taught mathematics to the Turkish youth at the dersane for a year. I was giving university preparation lessons. That's how I got to know the Service." The day after Şakir got married, he did something that will astonish you as readers, and you will say, 'Is this even possible?' You will read his story in the following section.

4.24. The Scapegoat in the Class: Enes

Enes was born in Denizli in 1972. When he was a six-month-old baby, he migrated to Sydney, Australia, with his family. He completed his primary, secondary, high school, and university education in Sydney. He worked as a telecommunications engineer. Enes attended primary school at Burke Street. He recalls that after he and his family came from Türkiye, his uncle also came with his family. Due to limited financial means, the two families initially stayed together in a rented house. This was not only done by Enes's family but also by other Turkish families. Generally, only one person worked, and most of their earnings went towards rent. Like many Turks, Enes's family also planned to stay for a few years, save some money, and return to Türkiye. While Enes was in primary school, he would become good friends with Şakir and other Turkish students.

Enes recounts: "In 1981, we moved to Cabramatta. We didn't know anyone there. By the time we started to get to know the Turkish families in the area. I felt like a stranger there and began to learn who I was and what I was. For example, I learned about ANZAC in the fifth grade. We usually celebrated April 23rd and Republic Day at Turkish schools that opened on weekends. When the ANZAC topic was covered in the fifth grade, everyone in the class, including the teacher, looked at me; I felt like a scapegoat. My family sent me to mosques and weekend Quran courses during those years. I also attended Turkish courses on weekends.

Until middle and high school, I had only one or two Turkish friends. Later, I started attending Canley Vale High School. There, I had only one Turkish friend. The Turks in the area were sending their children to other high schools. My class had Vietnamese, Greeks, and immigrant children from Croatia; it was a multicultural environment."

4.25. The First Friday Prayer at the University of Technology Sydney

While attending university, Enes met his fellow townsmen, Hakan and Nasreddin. As he studied, a new social circle began to form. Later, Hakan and Nasreddin took him to the talks at Redfern Mosque. Enes organised the first Friday prayer at the University of Technology Sydney. When asked where he got the idea to organise Friday prayers, Enes said, "When I attended the talks at Redfern Mosque on Friday and Saturday evenings, some of the young people there talked about the activities they were doing at their universities.

On that day, Şakir, who was at the talk, mentioned that he had established a Muslim Students Association at his university and requested a room from the university administration to perform Friday prayers. The authorities had allocated a room for them." Inspired by this, Enes established a Muslim Students Association at his university and requested a classroom for Friday prayers. The university administration allocated a classroom for them to perform Friday prayers at a specific time on Fridays. Enes prepared brochures announcing that Friday prayers would be held at the university and posted them on the bulletin board in the university lobby. The university had allocated that classroom for all religions, but Muslims generally used it. The classroom also had a place for ablution. Enes invited Garip Hoca to lead the first Friday prayer. Garip Hoca accepted Enes's invitation, asking someone else to lead the Friday prayer at his mosque, and came to lead the first Friday prayer there.

Initially, the congregation concluded with around ten students, but it grew over time. Eventually, the classroom was insufficient, and the university administration allocated a larger classroom on the 33rd floor. From that day to the present, Friday prayers have continued to be held at the university. Currently, Friday prayers are held in a large hall at the university, with over 500 students attending each week. Enes and other Muslim students placed booklets and brochures containing religious information in the classroom and English translations of the Quran. They also had prayer rugs for Friday prayers, but they would collect them, except for a few, and store them in a large bag, only bringing them out on Fridays. While studying at the university, Enes attended the talks of Buddhist and Christian groups. Later, Buddhists also attended the talks held at the mosque. In short, Enes's dialogue with non-Muslims began in his early university years. Enes and his friends would also post selected Quran verses and hadiths on some of the university's bulletin boards. This was because Australian society had incorrect information about Islam and Muslims. Enes and his friends used these bulletin boards to introduce Islam and Muslims, even if only in a small way. It can be said that his affiliation with Hizmet began in these years.

Enes shared his memories of those days: "My family was happy about my participation in the religious talks at Redfern Mosque. I now follow on Facebook the friends who were with me during middle and high school and see how the Turks lived. Most of them are in an impoverished state. Seeing their condition makes me feel good and grateful to God because I have a

better life and spiritual well-being. As far as I remember, in 1991, my family encouraged me to attend such talks. Later, we started teaching religion to high school students on the upper floor of a bookstore that opened in the Auburn district. During those years, we would consult with a few university students, including Halit Bey. I occasionally attended the talks at the dersane that opened in Kensington for 1-2 years. When Hoca Efendi came to Sydney, I couldn't meet him for some reason. As far as I remember, I couldn't attend the sermon at the mosque because I was organising Friday prayers at the university that day. While studying at the university, I would go to South Granville High School to teach scripture. We would sit in a room with the students and have a lesson; I would explain Islam for about 40 minutes. Of course, all those who attended were Muslims."

His friends know Enes as calm but hardworking. Over time, as the number of small businessmen and students increased, a joint board of trustees of Feza Foundation was formed. This is how Enes got to know the Hizmet Movement. In later years, he would take on significant projects in both education and the establishment of schools, as well as in social, religious, and interfaith dialogue, practically racing to do good deeds.

4.26. Muslims Compared to Cannibals

In Australia, the portrayal of Muslims is generally negative. The Western education system, influenced by the history of the war between Muslims and Christians and Orientalism, contains a lot of incorrect information about Islam and Muslims. Generally, the media also reports on bad Muslims, and positive news about Muslims is rarely published.

Veli started praying five times a day while in middle school. There was no place to pray at the public school he attended. However, he would pray in empty classrooms to avoid missing his prayers. Once, while he was praying, a few students entered the classroom and talked among themselves about him. "Do you know who these Muslims are? They are like the cannibals in Africa, very savage," they said. After finishing his prayer, Veli treated these students kindly and briefly explained the prayer to them.

4.27. Don't Say 'Is This Even Possible?

Halime migrated to Australia with her family in 1977 when she was three months old. After completing her high school education, she graduated

from the Faculty of Science at Melbourne. She then did a master's degree in education at the University of Sydney. Halime received religious education at the mosque, where her father was on the board for three years. When she was about fifteen, she met the sisters in the Hizmet movement through her father's influence. Her father was a trustee. Later, she started attending to spiritual study circle dersane and camp programs in her final year of high school. She got married at the age of 18 and moved to Sydney. Since her husband was also active in the Hizmet Movement, she joined the Hizmet Movement as well. Halime recalls those early days:

"Were the first activities held in a home environment? It was the early years of the Hizmet Movement. Since there was no school education, mentoring, or engagement with young people in the Turkish community, the Hizmet affiliate women would open their homes on weekends and organise talks and activities with us. This was a different experience because I had never been in such a boarding program before. My parents didn't allow me to attend camps and trips, but later, they allowed me, and I attended a few times. In these programs, I saw the altruism of the Hizmet affiliates because they would leave their household chores and, despite having small children, take care of young girls like me. My first mentor was Firdevs, and she lived in a house very close to Selimiye Foundation Dormitory building. Eren Bey's wife, Selime, also helped her. Both had small children, but they still tried to take care of us. They had dedicated themselves to mentoring at a young age. Their homes would practically function as a girls dersane on weekends."

Halime got engaged to Şakir. Halime recalls, "When I was engaged to Şakir Bey, I remember him telling me over the phone that they had bought a plot of land to build a school. During our phone conversations, he was very excited and would talk more about educational activities and the land they bought for the school. I was amazed by this." Yes, young people growing up in Australia talk about different things when engaged. Şakir seemed to be in love with education, talking about it with his fiancée over the phone.

4.28. Going to the Board of Trustees on the Second Day of Marriage

Halime recalls, "After marrying Şakir Bey, he asked for my permission to go to the board of trustees meeting on the evening of the second day of our marriage. Naturally, I was initially shocked. But I allowed him to go." This is how passionate Şakir was about Hizmet. Usually, people in Australia go on

a honeymoon to a distant place for a few weeks after getting married. Şakir, however, went to the board of trustees. For over 32 years, Şakir has always attended the board of trustees and continues to do so, making financial and moral sacrifices to establish educational institutions. In my research about Shakir, I found that his dedication continues today.

4.29. The Turning Point in Mikail's Life

Mikail was born in Karaman in 1964 and migrated to Australia with his family in 1970 when he was five years old. He completed his primary, secondary, high school, and university education in Sydney, earning a degree in accounting and economics. After graduating from university, he began working as an accountant and has continued in this profession to this day. However, Mikail also has a strong social side; he can easily communicate with those around him with his calm demeanour.

Mikail shares his early years in Australia: "The first five years were my childhood, so according to what I've heard from my parents and uncles, the Turkish community went through a spiritual void. They distanced themselves from Islam a bit. Five or six years later, they felt the need for a mosque as a community, and mosque construction efforts began. My father played an active role in constructing the Erskineville and Redfern mosques. Therefore, I grew up closely connected with the mosque and its congregation." On the other hand, Mikail also observed some issues that arose among the mosque's board of directors or congregation. Since he was still in high school, he couldn't fully understand the root causes of these problems.

In 1992, he met Halit, who had come to Sydney. He occasionally participated in the programs held at Redfern Mosque. Additionally, he managed the Sancak Radio programs, which broadcast for one hour a week on behalf of Islamic associations, along with two other people. Until then, there was only the state-run SBS radio, which broadcast in Turkish for one hour daily. At that time, the radio was in the hands of the left-wing, and they broadcast according to their ideology and wishes. On the other hand, this broadcasting policy mainly was not well-received by Turkish Islamic communities. However, there was no other news source besides the radio in those days.

In May 1992, Mikail visited Fethullah Gülen Hoca Efendi, who had come to Sydney, at darsane in Kensington and attended his talk. However, due to work, he couldn't attend the sermon Hoca Efendi gave at Auburn Gallipoli Mosque.

During those years, Mikail travelled to Türkiye. He visited Haşim abi Hoca Efendi, who had previously come to Australia and whom he had met. Haşim abi was the general manager of Zaman newspaper at that time. He invited Mikail to his home for dinner. When Mikail arrived at Haşim abi home, he was astonished. All the furniture in the house seemed like second-hand items. The fact that the general manager of Zaman newspaper lived such a simple life greatly impacted Mikail, and upon returning to Australia, he wholeheartedly embraced the Hizmet in Australia.

After meeting Halit, Mikail frequently got together with him. Mikail said, "We were very excited and enthusiastic about those days. We talked about beautiful hopes and projects. The new brothers who came told us about the Hizmet worldwide activities and said these educational activities should also happen here, in Sydney and Australia. They said these things needed to happen, and we believed and embarked on this path. Thank God, we have been trying to continue with God's grace since that day." Mikail has a very calm personality and is rarely seen angry in the community. He is exceptionally polite and rational. He does a lot of work but doesn't want to be in the spotlight.

4.30. Can a Visit Save Someone's Faith?

Visits made for the sake of God can sometimes lead to people's guidance and serve as a shield for the preservation of faith. Garip Hoca recalls: "Once, a friend told me a Turk lived in a neighbourhood 15 km from our mosque. However, this person had no connection with the mosque, the congregation, or the Turkish community." Garip Hoca got that person's address from his friend. Since there were no mobile phones at that time and the person to be visited didn't have a phone, Garip Hoca went and knocked on the Turk's door. The person who opened the door was initially surprised. Garip Hoca introduced himself as the imam of Redfern Mosque and said he had come for a visit and, if he was available, they could have tea together. The person invited Garip Hoca in his apartment, quickly made tea in the kitchen, and brought it. Garip Hoca didn't talk about religion, faith, or Islam; they just talked about pleasant things. While drinking tea, the person said that he had been living in that house for three years and that Garip Hoca was the first person to knock on his door, and his eyes filled with tears as he said this. He said, "I've been living here for three years. You are the first person to knock on my door and visit me. Thank you very much." While drinking tea, Garip Hoca asked a few

questions and listened to him. Then he asked for permission and left. About a week later, Garip Hoca saw this man attend Friday prayer. After that, the person continued to participate in Friday prayers. Garip Hoca realised that a visit made for the sake of God could sometimes lead to the salvation of a faith.

4.31. Let's Not Lose Our Children

The first Turkish immigrants to Australia thought they would work for a few years and then return to their country. However, this did not happen. As their children began to grow up in Australia, they became concerned. These children, who did not receive a good education, faced the danger of losing their religious and cultural identities at a young age. Some even started using drugs, became alcoholics, or adopted some immoral values that their parents would not approve of. Parents who wanted to preserve their cultural and spiritual values began to seek various solutions. Some started sending their children to weekend Quran courses or Turkish language courses. However, this did not yield the desired results. Consequently, some families temporarily returned to Türkiye to prevent their children from being corrupted.

Yavuz's family also returned to Türkiye with this intention. They wanted Yavuz to grow up as a good person, attached to his national and spiritual values. Yavuz's older brother had started causing trouble for the family. Yavuz was born in Sydney and attended primary school. He had also started middle school, but before finishing it, the family temporarily returned to Türkiye. Let's hear the rest from Yavuz:

"When my parents returned to Türkiye, I went with them and continued my education there. When we went to Türkiye, my parents allowed me to live with my sisters because I couldn't be on my own. They felt comfortable with that arrangement. They thought they would return to Australia in a few months. I settled with my sister in Konya. At that time, my brother-in-law was involved with the Hizmet Movement. He used to meet with Abdullah Aymaz, who was in Konya at that time. When he mentioned that I had come from Australia and would be studying there, Abdullah Aymaz recommended Nilüfer College in Bursa. However, neither I nor my brother-in-law and sister were keen on this because I didn't want to live away from them.

During those years, there was a religious leader named Abdullah Büyük from the Naqshbandi Order. He had opened a Quran course. After the September 12, 1980 military coup in Türkiye, Abdullah Aymaz advised them

to convert the Quran course into a private high school, as it could be closed down by military. They turned the Quran course into a private boys' college. At that time, I was praying five times a day. My elder brother's religious practices were lacking, and I didn't want to be like him. Of course, my parents didn't want me to be like him either. My brother-in-law used to listen to Hoca Efendi's sermon tapes and cry. When I listened to the tapes, I felt emotional but could not understand. I asked my brother-in-law why Hoca Efendi was crying. He told me, 'His only concern is for young people like you to become good people and receive a good education.' This piqued my curiosity. I said, 'Let's go visit Hoca Efendi and meet him.' My brother-in-law said, 'Not everyone can see and visit him.' I asked, 'Why?' Then I said, 'I have prayed for you until today, and God has accepted my prayers. I will go and visit Hoca Efendi.'

It turned out my brother-in-law also attended the Risale-i Study circles. Since there was military pressure on religious people at that time, these study circles couldn't be held openly. Once, they took me to one of these study circles. People entered the house in intervals of three to five minutes, and Risale-i Nur was read, and the content discussed. They made me read too, but I didn't understand anything. Those who were knowledgeable made some comments while reading Risale. After the talk, people left the house in intervals of three to five minutes to avoid drawing attention. Before leaving, they discussed how many pages of Risale they would read until the next week, and a small gift would be given to those who read a lot.

During that time, I also visited Abdullah Büyük Hoca. They had their spiritual study circles. They would say, 'We will teach you Arabic, and you will teach us English.' They complimented me. However, my heart was with Risale-i Nur and Hoca Efendi. While studying at the private school opened by Abdullah Büyük Hoca in Konya, I had a friend in my class who was a hafidh and who memorised the entire Quran. He told me about Yamanlar College in Izmir. My friend said that Yamanlar College had very good laboratories and provided a good education. He said there was a beautiful mosque and minaret beside the school and they raised very good, quality people. Of course, I didn't know about this. Because he knew about my love for Hoca Efendi. My Turkish wasn't very good at that time, and I was also trying to improve it. I decided to go to this school. With my broken Turkish of that time, I wrote a letter to the school's principal. In the letter, I first introduced myself. I remember writing, 'My Turkish is intermediate level, but I am hardworking and diligent.' I also

mentioned, 'I love the Hizmet Movement at this level.' I wrote that I loved Hoca Efendi. Finally, I added, 'I want to come and enrol in your school and study there.' At that time, I didn't have the school's address. I couldn't find the name and address of the school in the yellow pages. I mentioned this in my talk, asking if anyone knew the address. But no one knew. So, I wrote 'Izmir Private Yamanlar High School, Izmir' and mailed the letter.

In the summer, I would go to Sarayköy. My cousin would come and go to Sarayköy. I would occasionally talk to him about the Hizmet movement. Later, I went to the mosque for either the noon or afternoon prayer, I don't remember exactly. I met Ali Abi, who was known as the minibus driver Ali, at the mosque. He invited me to his house for tea. I started visiting Ali Abi's house. We would talk about Risale and Hoca Efendi at his house. Ali Abi took a close interest in me. At that time, few people were involved in the Hizmet Movement in Sarayköy. I asked him about Yamanlar College in Izmir. He said he didn't know much about it. 'Yes, there is such a school, but let me get more information and get back to you,' he said.

At that time, the district mufti had previously stayed at Bozyaka Dormitory. He said, 'I will put you in touch with Yamanlar College.' Later, they found the phone number, and we called. They said, 'Let him come for an interview, and we will decide accordingly.' All of this happened within almost a week. Of course, my father didn't want to disrupt my routine. He didn't like disrupting an established routine. I managed to convince him with difficulty. Then, I went to Izmir. They gave me an exam at Yamanlar High School. At that time, Necmi Hoca was the vice principal. Thus, I enrolled at Yamanlar High School. At that time, I had little connection with the Hizmet Movement. As far as I remember, they gave me the book "The Doubts Brought by the Age" to read. Of course, Risale lessons were still being held, and we were listening to Hoca Efendi's tapes. On Friday afternoons, when the National Anthem was being read, it was as if someone was peeking at us from behind the curtain on the top floor. Rıdvan Hoca was our dormitory supervisor at that time. Ahmet Toker was our school principal. Both were very sincere and selfless people. For example, although Rıdvan Hoca was married and had five children, he would only go home on Thursday and Friday nights and spend all his other time with us at the dormitory."

4.32. First Encounter with Hoca Efendi

Yavuz continues, "My encounter with Hoca Efendi happened like this. At that time, we understood that Hoca Efendi lived on the school's top floor, but we didn't know he was staying there continuously. Sometimes, among the students, we would talk about mystical things. We would hear things like, 'Hoca Efendi comes, enters through this door, walks down this corridor,' and so on. Once, even Reşit Muhtar, a famous singer, had come and visited Hoca Efendi.

One day, the dormitory manager asked during an evening study session, "Who here would like to sing an ilahi (hymn) somewhere?" They wanted me and my friend Bahadır to join the choir to sing ilahis. As far as I knew, the school was very good at teaching subjects like mathematics, physics, and chemistry, but there didn't seem to be anything related to the arts. I had no musical experience myself. We went to Reşit Muhtar, and we practised this with him. We accompanied him in the ilahis he sang. The five of us sang ilahis at the graduation ceremony of our seniors that year. It was a Friday evening. The school was going to be on break. After the graduation ceremony in the evening, I was going to return to Sarayköy with my parents to spend the summer vacation there. I was eagerly looking forward to the vacation.

The dormitory manager told me that evening, "We are going to Istanbul." I said, "My parents are here, we were going to return to Sarayköy, they will be upset." He said, "I will talk to them." It turned out that the next evening, there was a graduation ceremony at Fatih College in Istanbul, and we were going to sing ilahis there as well.

On the same night, we set off for Istanbul by bus with two seniors and the members of the ilahi choir. Some of my friends in the choir had fathers who were trustees of Hizmet foundations and had close ties with the Hizmet Movement, but I didn't have such a background. We arrived in Altunizade around dawn. No one was saying it openly, but they were talking about Hoca Efendi, as if we were going to see him. No one was speaking definitively, but they said we might see him. We performed the morning prayer in Altunizade. Later, other tables were set up. We were also invited when Reşit Muhtar was invited to the table where Hoca Efendi was sitting. Somehow, I ended up sitting immediately to the left of Hoca Efendi. I couldn't eat anything due to excitement. Maybe I was pretending to eat. Once, out of excitement, I pressed a fork on an olive, and it fell in front of Hoca Efendi. Hoca Efendi started asking everyone's name one by

one from the right. Of course, he knew some of my friends' fathers. He was not only asking about their well-being but also their fathers. He even asked about some of their older and younger brothers. I later learned that Hoca Efendi had named most of my friends in the choir. My excitement increased even more because I didn't have a background like theirs.

Just as it was my turn, Kemal Hoca came and said to Hoca Efendi, "Hocam, we were thinking of getting suits for the team of the ilahi choir," and we got up from the table. Thus, I didn't get to talk to Hoca Efendi that day. That evening, we sang ilahis. I remember one was "Kalk Yiğit, uykudan" (Rise, Brave One, from Sleep). We stayed there that night and set off the next day. They had given our names, and Hoca Efendi signed one of his books for each of us."

Yavuz returned to Izmir with his friends and attended a camp organised for students. Hadiths were studied at the camps, but studying Risale-i Nur was very difficult for Yavuz because it was written in Ottoman Turkish. At the camp, the five daily prayers were performed in the congregation, and tesbihat (remembrance of Allah) was done at the end of the prayers. Additionally, special spiritual talks were held, especially in the evenings. There was such a spiritual atmosphere at the camp that some students saw the Prophet Muhammad in their dreams, and some saw Ustad and Hoca Efendi in their dreams.

During those days, there was a military coup attempt in Russia, but it was unsuccessful. At that time, some Tatar students had also come to Izmir and joined the camp. They memorised short Quranic surahs at the camp to perform their daily obligatory prayer. Due to the coup, the Tatar students couldn't return to their country by plane and had to cross into Russia through the Sarp border gate by bus in the northeast of Türkiye. Yavuz and a few others accompanied these students. On the bus, they strengthened their brotherhood and had fruitful conversations. They stayed overnight in some places on the way to Sarp border. Yavuz recounts:

"We stayed overnight in Afyon. I saw Hoca Efendi in my dream. Hoca Efendi said, 'I didn't ask your name when you were in Istanbul.' The group leader entered my room and woke me up for prayer. So, my dream was interrupted. When the leader entered the room and called me by my name, I woke up. I was very upset that my dream was interrupted.

We took the Tatars to the Sarp border gate. When we parted from them, my friend Bahadır and I cried our hearts out. Even the bus driver cried. There

was such a spiritual atmosphere during the journey that it is difficult for me to explain."

After returning to Izmir, Yavuz unexpectedly encountered Hoca Efendi at the building in Karşıyaka. Until that day, he had entered and exited Hoca Efendi's presence many times and served tea, but no dialogue had occurred between them. Hoca Efendi said to him, "Welcome."

Yavuz and his friends fasted on Mondays and Thursdays while they were students. They also woke up for tahajjud (night prayer) every night. They reached a point where they didn't look favourably upon those who didn't fast on Mondays and Thursdays or didn't wake up for tahajjud. Their dedication to worship and their regular recitations had a profound impact on their spiritual lives. Some young high school students saw the Prophet Muhammad, Bediüzzaman, or Hoca Efendi in their dreams. The dormitory supervisor, therefore, did not allow them to fast on Mondays and Thursdays for a certain period.

Yavuz also joined the circle of theology students who received private lessons from Hoca Efendi and listened to him while he taught. As Yavuz was about to graduate from Yamanlar College, he began to feel sad. He was staying at the school dormitory and often had the chance to be in Hoca Efendi's presence. He knew that once he graduated, he would lose this opportunity. He even thought, "I wish I could stay here as a tea server or a doorman and never leave."

4.33. The First Hizmet Mentor in Australia

Abu Hurairah (May Allah be pleased with him) reported:
The Messenger of Allah said, "He who introduced some good practice in Islam which was followed after him (by people) he would be assured of reward like one who followed it, without their rewards being diminished in any respect. And he who introduced some evil practice in Islam which had been followed subsequently (by others), he would be required to bear the burden like that of one who followed this (evil practice) without theirs being diminished in any respect."[121]

When the Prophet Muhammad gave the banner to Ali for the conquest of Khaybar, he said, "By Allah, if Allah guides a single person through you, it

121 Sahih Muslim 1017e, https://sunnah.com/muslim:1017e

will be better for you than having red camels."[122] Being a means for someone's eternal happiness is more valuable and significant than donating a field full of sheep or even everything the sun rises upon. Donating a field full of sheep is a great virtue and reward, but it is limited. However, the happiness of the person you guide is not limited; it is eternal. Their gratitude and appreciation for you will be eternal.[123]

Fethullah Gülen addresses the concept of guidance in the context of faith, morality, and sincerity. He says, "Guidance is the art of reminding a person of their responsibilities towards themselves, their Lord, and the created beings."[124] The most effective way to provide guidance is to live it and be a model. Practice comes before theory, and actions come before words. This statement indicates that guidance should be provided not only with verbal advice but also with exemplary behaviour. Those who serve should not put themselves forward while guiding; they should never forget that they are a bridge, a means.

After graduating from college, the dormitory supervisor took Yavuz to Hoca Efendi. Hoca Efendi said to Yavuz, "You have an Australian passport. If it is not too difficult for you, it would be very good if you returned to Australia." Yavuz accepted this but thought, "I wish I could stay here." He even thought, "If they sent me to England, I could guide there. Because England is close, I could visit Hoca Efendi frequently." Australia was very far away. There was no opportunity to come to Türkiye and visit Hoca Efendi frequently. This saddened Yavuz.

Yavuz recalls: "While mentoring at school, I dealt with the most challenging children. I wondered how I would continue communicating with them when I went to Australia. When Hoca Efendi told me this, it was still early June, and school hadn't finished yet. When July came, Hoca Efendi reminded me again. After that, I tried to avoid being seen by Hoca Efendi. I attended five daily prayers with him and his talks in the congregation, but I avoided places where we could be alone after the talks. In August, I met Hoca Efendi on the stairs on the fifth floor. He said, 'If it is not too difficult, it would be good if you returned. If you don't want to tell me what's on your mind, you can write it down.' Later, whenever I read something or listened to one of Hoca Efendi's sermon tapes, the importance of obedience coincided.

122 Buhari 7/3468, Müslim 2406/34.

123 https://sorularlaislamiyet.com/hidayete-vesile-olmanin-mukafati-nedir

124 Fethullah Gülen, Sızıntı, Ocak 1985, s. 45.

I couldn't stand it anymore and bought my ticket. I went to Hoca Efendi to ask for his blessing. Then, I received his prayers and came to Australia on August 18, 1992. While I was with Barbaros Abi, a close associate of Hoca Efendi, in his room, Hoca Efendi said, 'We are giving you a book; what else should we give?' I said, 'I don't want anything.' He took off his robe halfway and said, 'Should I give you my robe?' I said, 'I don't want it, Hocam.' He said, 'Let me take off my robe and give it to you,' and he gave me his robe.

Due to my experience in Türkiye, when I came to Australia, the person in charge Fatih called me to be a mentor at Hudeybiye Dormitory in Melbourne. I had previously partially worked as a mentor at the Hafiz Ali Dormitory in Sydney. After returning to Australia, Yavuz became the first mentor and served first in Sydney and then in Melbourne.

4.34. Vakkas's Journey to Australia

Vakkas was the child of a wealthy family. His family wanted to raise him differently. However, from a young age, Vakkas had other things in his heart. While in middle school, he started going to a dormitory in Gaziantep, run by the Hizmet Movement, where high school students stayed, to study. His goal was to prepare for prestigious science high schools. There, a university student volunteered to teach Vakkas mathematics. He enjoyed going to the dormitory, studying there, and spending time with the friends he made. He also liked the spiritual atmosphere in the dormitory. However, his family was not keen on him going to that dormitory. His father asked his accountant about the dormitory, who labelled it "that dormitory belongs to such and such group." As a result, Vakkas had to listen to his family. Not listening would be disrespectful. Later, through a friend in his class who attended the dersane of the Risale-I Nur students, he started going to their study house but didn't tell his family. He also didn't completely sever his relationship with the brothers at the Hizmet dormitory. On their advice, he enrolled in the Anatolian Technical High School. He even started mentoring at the dormitory in his final year of high school. Later, through the readers' channel, he went to both Artvin and Van, where Risale-i Nur reading camps were held. While in Van, under the influence of Risale-i Nur followers, he wanted to study physics at the Middle East Technical University. Vakkas' sister also studied international relations at the Middle East Technical University. When she graduated, their parents sent her to the United States for a master's degree.

Vakkas started staying at the Risale-i Nur (okuyucular group) dersane in Ankara. When his father came to Ankara, he didn't allow him to live in dersane. He rented a house for Vakkas and wanted him to live there alone. Vakkas convinced his father that he couldn't live alone in that house. Since he had previously mentored students in high school, he wanted to continue doing the same. Therefore, he went to the Hizmet' dersane. There, the five daily prayers were performed in congregation, tesbihat (remembrance of Allah) was done, religious books were studied, and some evenings, spiritual talks were held. There was a vibrant spiritual atmosphere in dersane. However, he later wanted to go to Boğaziçi University to study. But to get in, he needed to know English well. Since his family had the means, he discussed with them and decided to go to England for a few months to improve his English.

While learning English in England, he planned to return to Türkiye and take the university entrance exams. He was confident. He had set his mind on getting a better score in the university exams and studying at Boğaziçi. However, that year, the university exams were moved earlier, and Vakkas didn't know about it, so he couldn't take the exam. He met with Eren, a teacher who had taught him in high school. Upon his advice, he wanted to go to Australia.

His father wanted to send Vakkas to America to study like his sister. But Vakkas convinced his father to let him go to Australia instead. He then enrolled in an English course in Sydney. When he arrived in Sydney, a few distant relatives met him. Thus, Vakkas's journey to Australia began. After arriving, he looked into whether any Hizmet was affiliated in Australia. Later, through someone, he got Halit Bey's phone number and met with him in Sydney. After this meeting, he enrolled at the University of Wollongong and completed his undergraduate degree.

4.35. The Service of a Wealthy Family's Child

While studying in Wollongong, Vakkas mentored 6-7 middle and high school students at the dersane. He cleaned and cooked their meals; in other words, he was like a servant not just a mentor. Erkam, who lived with him at that time, said, "Vakkas was amazing. Despite coming from a wealthy family, he served the students at the dersane. On one hand, he was a compassionate mentor to them; on the other hand, he did all the chores at the dersane. It was very rare to see a child from a wealthy family doing such things in Türkiye." Even after nearly 30 years, Vakkas hasn't lost this servant-like character and still cooks for students and serves them at programs and camps.

His attitude has positively impacted both the dersane residents and his students in later years. He is not just a mentor, a director, or a teacher but also a role model. He has established himself as a role model for his students through his actions. He dedicated his time to this and, with his wife, they would donate half of their earnings to educational projects or those in need. In this book's second and third volumes, you will read about the contributions and altruisms of Vakkas and his wife in establishing educational institutions and educating students in Australia.

4.36. Hizmet Activities in Sydney

The Turkish community in Sydney was similar to the Turkish community in Melbourne. The Turkish community first established a mosque in Erskineville. However, there were issues regarding who would manage the mosque. According to some accounts, there were even fights, and the matter was taken to court. Later, a group that split from this mosque bought an old church in Redfern and converted it into a mosque. In both mosques, people who had done some teaching in Türkiye and knew the Quran served as imams and taught children. The general belief in the community at that time was that they would work for 3-5 years, save money, and return to Türkiye. However, this did not happen.

4.37. The Youth of Redfern

Garip Hoca worked as the imam at Redfern Mosque. Generally, the congregation would arrive 15-20 minutes before the Friday prayer on Fridays. At other times, only 3-5 non-Turkish Muslims would come for daily obligatory prayers. Garip Hoca, who was very active with community work in Türkiye, felt quite bored in the first few months as an imam. Similarly, his wife was a Quran course teacher in Türkiye and used to hold spiritual talks and meet with women in the district. These conditions did not exist in their new place, and being far from her family, she often cried every day. At that time, calling Türkiye was expensive, costing $1.20 per minute.

Over time, Garip Hoca met 2-3 high school students and held spiritual talks with them at the mosque on Friday evenings. One of these young men later became a lover of the Prophet. He constantly talked about the Prophet and mentioned him in his daily messages. He was also a lover of Medina. He went on pilgrimage twice. Once, while visiting the blessed grave of the Prophet

in Medina and about to leave, the Prophet appeared to him in a waking state and patted his back. From that day on, he turned his back on the world and would mentally visit Medina daily. One of his greatest desires was to die, be buried in Medina, and be a neighbour to the Prophet.

Gradually, the number of young people attending the spiritual talks at Redfern Mosque began to increase. To attract more youth to the mosque, Garip Hoca organised picnics on weekends. Additionally, after the Friday evening talks, he would make and serve çiğ köfte, a traditional food from south-east Türkiye to the young attendees. Some even started calling him the "çiğ köfteci imam." At that time, mosques would offer children Quran lessons and basic religious knowledge for a few hours once or twice a week. Additionally, Turkish language lessons were taught to Turkish children on weekends. However, there were no spiritual talks specifically aimed at young people. Garip Hoca worried, "If things continue like this, will the Turkish mosques not have any members after the old Turks who attended the congregation on Fridays die? Without attendees and members, will the mosques become museums?" However, his perspective changed as the number of young people coming to the mosque on weekends increased. He started holding talks on both Friday and Saturday evenings. Young people would come from all over Sydney, even from an hour and a half away, to attend the spiritual talks. Sometimes, they would stay until 3 a.m., engaging in discussions, question and answer sessions, and enjoying fruits or snacks. There was an inspirational spiritual atmosphere in the mosque, which attracted the youth like a magnet. One young man even dreamt of the Prophet praying with them in the mosque. All these experiences served as a spiritual motivation for them.

To further attract young people to the mosque, Garip Hoca began organising picnics in nearby parks on weekends. Towards the end of the year, he organised a camp for 24 youth. Since they had no money, they found a free bus from a community centre. The 24 participants camped for four days and three nights in tents by Myall Lakes in New Castle. There were toilets in the bush but no showers, so the young men bathed in the lake. Garip Hoca, using a small gas cylinder he borrowed, made tea and coffee and cooked meals for the youth. The five daily prayers were performed in the congregation, and after each prayer, Garip Hoca would give a 10-15-minute spiritual talk. After the night prayer, they would gather around a fire and continue their discussions until midnight. The youth would ask Garip Hoca any questions that came to

mind, and he would answer them kindly and without judgment. The camp had minimal resources. For example, lunch consisted only of pasta, dinner was çiğ köfte, and breakfast included tea, cheese, olives, and bread. They couldn't bring meat or meat products because they lacked a refrigerator. These camps became a tradition and were held annually for six years.

While these talks were taking place in the mosque and young people were coming to the talks instead of going to discos or using drugs, some people were not idle. As the saying goes, "Good deeds often face many obstacles." Rumours about Garip Hoca began to spread. These rumours were discussed in the Turkish coffee shops. Some claimed he was raising young people to be enemies of Atatürk, while others accused him of being a PKK supporter.

4.38. Let's Beat Up the Imam

Ömer recalls: "Once, I went to a Turkish coffee shop in the Redfern district of Sydney. There, two young men were playing billiards. They were talking among themselves about how the imam of Redfern Mosque, Garip Hoca, was instilling hatred for Atatürk in young people and making them curse him. They then said, 'We will go and beat him up at the mosque this weekend.' Hearing this, I got up and approached them. I asked the two young men, 'Do you know the name of the imam at Redfern Mosque?' They said, 'No.' I asked, 'Do you know him?' They said, 'No.' I asked, 'Where did you hear this?' I said, 'I come to this coffee shop regularly every week. This is the first time I've seen you here.' They said, 'We come here to play billiards and then leave.' I told them, 'If you haven't seen or heard anything like this about the mosque imam, please don't speak without evidence.'"

While distributing döner, Ömer encountered a close friend and told him what he had heard from the two young men at the coffee shop. Ömer told his friend, 'The mosque imam is holding spiritual talks with young people at the mosque. The two young men at the coffee shop don't like these talks and want to beat up the imam.' My friend and I decided to go to the mosque on Saturday evening and keep watch outside. If they came, we were determined to beat them up." Garip Hoca was holding his spiritual talk at the mosque. They waited for a long time, but no one came. The two young men from the coffee shop didn't show up. Thinking they might come next week, they went again on Saturday evening and waited outside the mosque. They waited for a long time, but again, no one came. Ömer recalls, "As far as I remember, we went for

the third week. At that time, Garip Hoca saw my friend and me outside the mosque and invited us in. We went inside and listened to the talk. We liked the talk and continued attending from then on."

Ömer and his friend became regular attendees of these talks. As the saying goes, "There is good behind some things that seem bad." The young men's conversation turned out to be a blessing for Ömer and his friend.

Ömer's brother-in-law had been imprisoned, and Garip Hoca had visited him. Later, he started attending Garip Hoca's spiritual talks in prison. After attending the talks, he began praying five times daily in prison. He was later released. Ömer told his brother-in-law about the two young men planning to beat up Garip Hoca. Hearing this, his brother-in-law said, "show me those two young men, and I'll take care of them. I'm already used to prison." According to Ömer, if he had told his brother-in-law who they were, he would have gone and beaten them up without hesitation. However, Ömer did not allow his brother-in-law to beat them up.

4.39. A Dream Come True: Opening a School in Sydney in Three Years

Ebu Bekir recalls, "As far as I remember, Alican Bey came at the end of 1992 or the beginning of 1993. We were doing some work at the newly opened dersane in Kensington. He rested for a while and then shared a dream he had. He said we would open a school in Sydney in three years based on his dream. Indeed, three years later, the school was opened." Additionally, Hakan's mother also had a dream. In her dream, she saw the land for the Amity school before it was purchased. She even saw a water pit near the centre of the land. When she came to the opening of the school, she said, 'I saw this place in my dream before, and they told me it would become a school.' I asked Hakan about this dream, and he confirmed, 'Yes, my mother said she had such a dream.'

4.40. They Must Be Crazy

When Ebu Bekir and his friends shared their educational ideals with Turkish people, some saw them as dreamers and believed that what they were saying was impossible. Some even said, "You must be crazy." However, Ebu Bekir and Hizmet affiliates believed they would succeed. He recounts, "Once, Halit Bey sat with a nationalist friend at Eastlakes Park. He told this friend that our community needed a school. Our young people were not going to university or studying. Some were dying from drug use. We needed to be concerned about

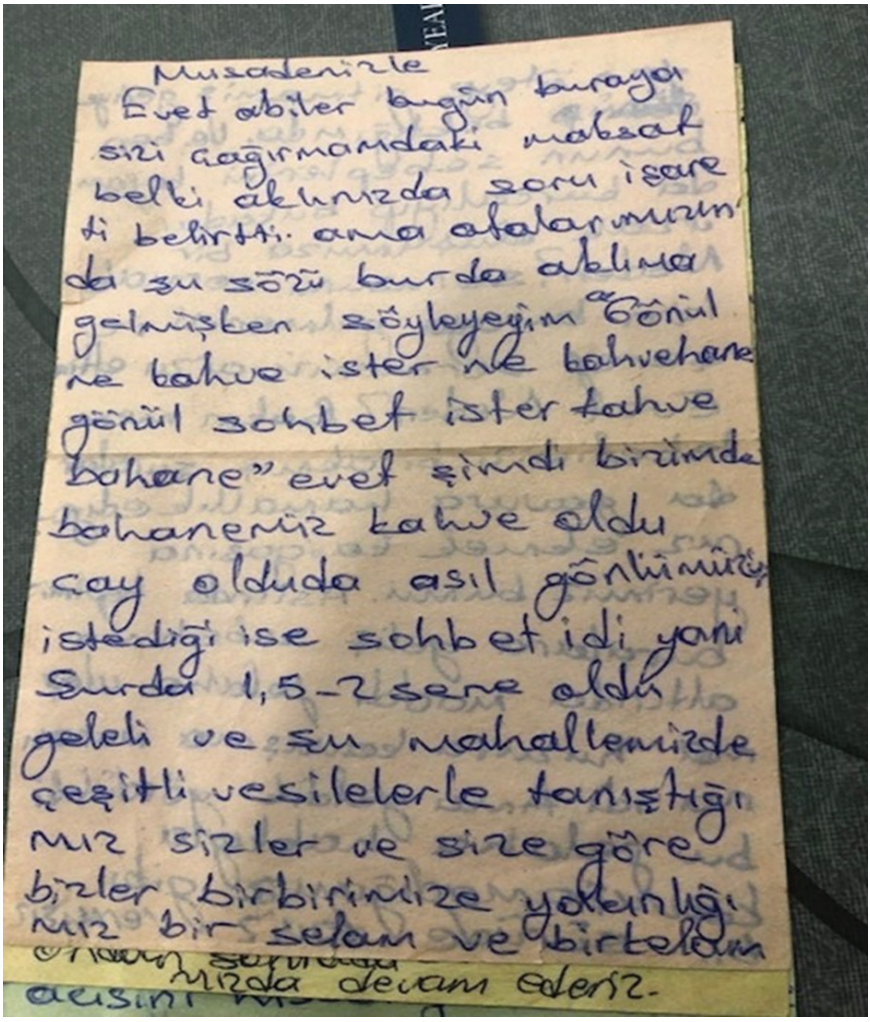
safeguarding this generation and establishing schools. And we will build this school with God's help," he said. The nationalist friend told Halit Bey, 'I know our community. Our community won't and can't build a school.' However, Halit Bey firmly replied, 'We will build this school.' I later heard this from that nationalist friend. Time proved Halit Hoca was right. The school was built, alhamdulillah. Of course, the trustees contributed the most to this school. But I can also say that our community supported it a lot."

Ebu Bekir continues, "Every beauty or success we saw motivated us and made us strive even harder. Sometimes, obstacles arose, but we continued striving to assist the community. Honestly, it was a challenging state of mind to understand. We wanted to spread our thoughts to the whole world because our message was universal. It was beneficial to every person. Where did we find all this energy? But we had energy and were running around. We were like birds with two wings. We spent our nights in worship and Hizmet, and our days worked very hard to achieve goals. Our efforts bore fruit; every two months, we gained new people for the board of trustees. In my opinion, this was entirely a blessing from God. We thought the same way back then. All these achievements were happening with God's help. It wasn't coming from us. We were trying to be good individuals. I believed the more hours or days I dedicated to this Hizmet, the more spiritually profitable it was for me.

Now, when I think about it, it seems those days had to be like that. There were very necessary tasks to be done. God used us as instruments in these tasks. I see this as a blessing from God. Honestly, I miss those days a lot. Not just me, but other Hizmet affiliates who were with us back then also miss those beautiful days."

4.41. The First Religious Study Circle at Home in Sydney

The first home talks were initiated at Ebu Bekir's house. Ebu Bekir gave the opening speech.


Musaadenizle
Evet abiler bugün buraya
sizi çağırmandaki maksat
belki aklınızda soru işare
ti belirtti. ama atalarımızın
da şu sözü burda ablama
gelmişken söyleyeğim "Gönül
ne kahve ister ne kahvehane
gönül sohbet ister kahve
bahane" evet şimdi bizimde
bahanemiz kahve oldu
çay olduda asıl gönlümüz
istediği ise sohbet idi yani
Şurda 1,5-2 sene oldu
geleli ve şu mahallemizde
çeşitli vesilelerle tanıştığı
mız sizler ve size göre
bizler birbirimize yabancılığı
mız bir selam ve birtelam
mızda devam ederiz.

Opening Notes of the Opening the First Talk

Ebu Bekir began, "The reason for our gathering today might have raised some questions in your minds. But let me share a saying from our ancestors that came to my mind: 'The heart neither desires coffee nor the coffeehouse; the heart desires conversation; coffee is just an excuse.' Yes, now our excuse has become coffee and tea. What our hearts truly desired was conversation. It has been about a year and a half or two since we came together, and despite meeting you through various means in our neighbourhood, our closeness has not gone

beyond a greeting and a word. I pondered the reasons for this distance and wanted you to come here and honour us so we could question this distance. Yes, we left our homeland and are working hard in this country. Actually, the underlying reason for all of us coming here was to achieve material prosperity and peace. But we came and saw that not only did we not fully achieve this material prosperity, but we also made many compromises. We compromised our home life and our work life. We have awakened our feelings of longing and delved into the worries of our children, whether they are born or yet to be born. Will we return or stay? We are worried about this. It is uncertain whether we will return dead or alive in Türkiye, and worst of all, we have lost or are losing our spirituality, which is everything to us. We have come to accept this state as natural. So much so that we no longer have a social life; we change our path to avoid greeting each other on the street, or if we go beyond that, we give a greeting and move on. So, should all this time go to waste? Should the human values created in the best form be so cheapened? Do we not have troubles? Do we not have the face to sit and share our troubles? I wanted to bring these troubles to light, to pour our hearts out to each other for the sake of God. As our national poet Mehmet Akif said, 'Do not go, traveller, come, let us cry together,' I wanted to say, 'Do not go, neighbour, come, let us sit and cry together.'

For a bright future, when I asked myself and those who know, the solution was to come together for the sake of God. After feeling such things and consulting those who know, we concluded that coming together was the right thing to do. I invited you to be a balm for our bleeding wounds. You all know our existing wounds. I hope you will overlook my extending this."

Ebu Bekir continued, "We watched Hoca Efendi's tapes in the talks we held at different homes. We also read hadiths and studied Risale-i Nur. Additionally, we read Hoca Efendi's books. There was a beautiful spiritual atmosphere. Halit Bey would also give spiritual talks in his unique manner. Later, I learned that Halit Bey would not eat anything daytime when he was to give a talk, imitating Hoca Efendi. Later, those who attended the talks wanted them in their homes. So, we started holding talks at a different house each week. The spiritual atmosphere of those talks was extraordinary. Everyone who attended the talks was happy.

Later, Erkam Bey also joined us, and our study house became more lively. With Halit Bey's and Erkam Bey's efforts, high school and university students

started coming to the dersane. Later, the young people who attended Redfern Mosque also slowly began to get to know and serve the Hizmet movement. They already had the foundation. With their participation, things started to progress. Over time, the management boards of the mosque associations also began to imitate Hizmet activities. After a while, we also started a talk in the Auburn district. Some mosque congregations living in that area also opened their homes to us, and we held spiritual talks in their homes. Of course, opening a school for the community often came up during these talks. Many mosques had already been built, but schools were lacking. Everyone liked the idea of establishing a school. But establishing a school required courage. The number of people attending the talks in the Auburn district had increased. That district was heavily populated with the Turks at that time. The number of people attending the talks had grown so much that the homes could no longer accommodate them. There was a great enthusiasm.

I cannot forget the sacrifices of the late Hacı Rahmi Çetiner. He opened his home for iftars, and we held picnics in his backyard. Of course, we also held talks in his house. When Abdullah Aymaz Abi, a columnist for Zaman newspaper, came, he was delighted and wrote about his satisfaction in the Zaman newspaper upon his return. Later, Haşim abi Abi also came. Their visits motivated us.

Over time, we organised trips to different cities and held camps. Both these trips and camps increased the number of people participating in the Hizmet movement because there was a vibrant spiritual atmosphere there.

A love and affection developed among our community and friends. Of course, we used this love and affection as credit in establishing the school. Not for individuals. The foundations laid back then would later bear more diverse fruits. Every friend who joined the board at that time was like a firecracker. They tried to fulfil the duties assigned to them. But later, the same motivation did not continue. We had some internal issues among the board of trustees. Of course, this also negatively affected the Hizmet work to be done. There was a slowdown in the things that needed to be done. But later, they recovered. That was a separate test for us. Maybe there was wisdom in it. Ultimately, we are human. As a human being, one cannot consistently maintain the same motivation. Sometimes, ups and downs occur. However, I can sincerely say that many of the people who supported the Hizmet movement back then still support it with the same sincerity today."

When the first dersane was opened, they decided to hold a fundraising event, even with 3-5 people, to meet the basic needs of the dersane. Because this was the model in Türkiye. Small businessmen would meet the needs of the dersanes. Ebu Bekir and Hizmet affiliates wanted to apply this model in Sydney. They called 3-5 people they knew to a meeting for fundraising. But it didn't go as they expected. Erkam recounts, "There is something else I remember from those days. It wasn't on a large scale yet; we wanted to do a small-scale fundraising with 3-5 people. Someone brought a plate of beans. Another brought the clothes they were wearing for the fundraising. I won't name names. We never saw those people again. It was very difficult for all of us because we couldn't achieve what we wanted with the fundraising. But we didn't give up." Indeed, three years later, a fundraising event was held for the school. Many people participated and made sacrifices. You will read more about this service in the following pages.

4.42. Garip Hoca's Wrong Decision

Once, a political Islamist leader from Türkiye came to Australia and gave speeches in various places in Sydney and Melbourne. Some young people who attended Garip Hoca's talks listened to his speech in Sydney and were influenced by it. According to them, the methodology used by Garip Hoca was inappropriate. Garip Hoca had formed a consultation group of 7-8 people to run the youth activities at Redfern Mosque. One of the members of this group was significantly influenced by the political Islamists' speeches and said unpleasant things during the consultation. His words also upset Garip Hoca. He thought, "I will no longer interfere with these young people; let them go where they want and do what they want." After making this decision, the next day, a young man from the consultation group came to the mosque and urgently wanted to see Garip Hoca. He said he had seen the Prophet in his dream, and the Prophet had joined their consultation group and sat among them. Based on this dream, Garip Hoca believed he had made the wrong decision, repented, and continued the consultations and the talks with the young people. Garip Hoca saw a light in these young people. He believed they would serve the community in the future.

4.44. If Every Muslim Were Like This, the World Would Become Muslim

Once, Enes, who regularly attended the spiritual study circle at Redfern Mosque, brought a secular Turkish university lecturer to the talk. He listened to the conversation with you at the mosque. The lecturer said to Garip Hoca, "If every Muslim were like Enes, the whole world would become Muslim." Indeed, Bediüzzaman Said Nursi said, "If we demonstrate the perfections of Islamic morals and the truths of faith through our actions, the followers of other religions will certainly enter Islam in communities. Perhaps, some continents and states will also enter Islam."[125] If Muslims lived the sublime truths of Islam beautifully and embodied them in their lives, representing them fully through their actions and behaviours, people of other religions would enter Islam in waves. Unfortunately, in the last couple of centuries, Muslims have not been able to represent the beauty of Islam and have even become bad examples. As a result, followers of other religions have become disillusioned with Islam. Since every action of a Muslim is considered Islam, people say, "This is Islam!" They become interested if it is well represented; otherwise, they become hostile.[126]

4.45. Sincere Maqluba

Maqluba is a famous dish from Jordan. In the 1970s, a Jordanian named Kahit introduced this dish to the people in the Hizmet Movement while studying at the faculty of medicine in Izmir. Over time, it became a dish commonly eaten in dersanes, dormitories, and schools. Eventually, Hizmet affiliates who came to Australia also started cooking maqluba. Once, Nasreddin invited a secular person to dersane for a meal and served him maqluba. The guest loved the dish and asked Nasreddin for the ingredients and the recipe in writing. Nasreddin included sincerity (ihlas) as one of the ingredients on the list. The guest later went to a Turkish grocery store to buy the ingredients. When he asked for sincerity, the grocer explained that it was a religious term, not an ingredient. The secular person then realised it was a joke. The list was not wrong; Nasreddin had made the dish with sincerity. The story of the sincere maqluba became a well-known anecdote among Hizmet affiliates.

125 Bediüzzaman Said Nursi,Hutbe-i Şâmiye, s. 28

126 https://sorularlarisale.com/biz-ahlak-i-islamiyenin-ve-hakaik-i-imaniyenin-kemalatini-efalimizle-izhar-etsek-sair-dinlerin-tabileri-elbette

In the next Chapter, you will read about how the first Hizmet institution was established in Sydney, an anonymous woman's altruism, and her letter's impact on fundraising. You will also learn about God's blessings, the sacrifices made, the hardships endured, and the dreams that came true.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE FIRST DORMITORY, SCHOOL IN SYDNEY AND MELBOURNE

5.1. Hafız Ali Dormitory in Sydney

Yavuz returned to Australia from Türkiye and rented a large house in the Mascot suburb of Sydney with two friends. He aimed to continue the mentoring work he had learned in Izmir, helping students, preparing them for university, and keeping them away from harmful habits like drugs and alcohol. Additionally, he desired the youth to have good morals and perform their prayers.

Although aware of his brother's past, Yavuz did not want the youth to end up like him. At that time, young people would go to discos in the evenings and pick up bad habits. Sometimes, they would fight among themselves in these places or the nightlife. Yavuz was filled with a desire to prevent the youth from falling into such situations. He often asked himself what he could do.

After arriving in Australia from Türkiye, he felt like a fish out of water. In Türkiye, he prayed five times a day in congregation at the dormitory, performed supplications, attended talks, woke up for the tahajjud prayer, fasted on Mondays and Thursdays, and mentored the youth in the evenings and weekends. In other words, he lived in a spiritual atmosphere. However, Yavuz missed those days considerably after coming to Australia and felt very lonely. According to his account, he cried every evening for perhaps two months. Eventually, he came up with the idea of renting a house and using it as a dersane. He first shared this idea with two friends he had known since they were 3-4 years old, who came from non-practise Muslim families. He also shared about the mentoring he had done in Türkiye, how much he had changed, and how happy he was. He aimed to convince them to join him in some activities. Ultimately, his ideas appealed to both friends, and they rented a large two-story house in Mascot together.

As soon as they rented the house, he invited his friends over. He organised spiritual talks in the evenings and picnics on weekends. Gradually, the number of people coming to the dersane increased, reaching 30-40 people on weekends. On one occasion, the father of a student who had been his friend since they were 3-4 years old told Yavuz, "Leave my son alone." He did not want his son to participate in Yavuz's activities. Yavuz replied, "Uncle, what wrong are we doing that you ask this of me?" The father, who had come home drunk, said, "Purchase me a beer." Yavuz responded, "I won't buy you a beer, but I can buy you a coffee at a nearby café, and we can talk there." The friend's father asked Yavuz, "Do you receive money from Iran? Is this true?" Yavuz replied, "I don't know what you are talking about, and there is no such thing."

The friend's father asked, "What do you do in this house?" Yavuz explained, "We gather with students, I help them with their studies. We improve our Turkish, try to understand our history, and talk about our ancestors. We also pray together, and I take them to Friday prayers on Fridays. Do you think this is wrong?" The friend's father said, "No, it's not." He then asked Yavuz, "Do you instil hatred against Atatürk in these young people? Is this true?" Yavuz replied, "There is no such thing. Didn't Atatürk also tell people to learn their religion? We are doing the same." The friend's father was convinced and later started bringing food for the students to the dersane. He also silenced those who spoke negatively about the people coming and going from the house.

5.2. You Are Doing Good Things

They say that good deeds often face many obstacles. While Yavuz was engaging with the youth in their rented house, some people from the Turkish were not pleased with their activities. Yavuz recalls, "While we were conducting these activities at dersane, it turns out the police had been monitoring us due to complaints from some community members. Some had complained, saying, 'They are raising terrorists.' However, after six months of surveillance, the police determined we supported the youth. We learned about this later. Once, I had gathered many students in the backyard for a barbecue. Someone came and told me, 'Two police officers are at the door and want to speak with you.' I went to them, and they said, 'We have been monitoring you for a long time, but you are doing good things. We came to introduce ourselves and let you know that if you need any help, please inform us,' and then they left. Once, a member of the Turkish community ended up in court over a drug issue. He wanted to get rid of his drug habit. The police asked him, 'Can you get a reference letter?' and recommended Yavuz to him. The young Turk said, 'I don't know Yavuz,' but the police insisted, 'Go to him, talk to him.' they were pleased because they also did not want the Turkish youth in the area to have bad habits."

Over time, Halit and Hizmet's affiliates discussed turning the dersane into a small dormitory with Yavuz. The house was quite large and spacious, accommodating 15-20 students. And so they did. Hakan, who was an administrator at the dormitory during those years, recalled:

Hakan: "Regarding my memories of the dormitory, Yavuz and his friends had rented a large house. I remember it being discussed in a talk that we should turn it into a dormitory. Until that day, I did not know much about a

dormitory. Ultimately, the dersane was converted into a dormitory, and nearly twenty students lived there during the weekdays. The students at the dormitory attended the local middle and high schools during the day. After school, they would come to the dormitory, and I would help with their studies. We also had various mentoring programs outside of study hours. We would play soccer together and go on trips. Later, I became a manager of the dormitory. It was an outstanding experience for me, and I learned a lot. Because while taking care of the students and mentoring them, I also had to develop myself. I also heard from some students that they had inspirational dreams. Feza Foundation board members had their weekly board meetings at the dormitory."

One of the volunteers who helped at the Hafız Ali dormitory was Mikail. He shared his memories about the dormitory from those days:

"It was a large house, but it functioned like a dormitory, starting with 15-20 students. At that time, there were some issues with the Botany municipality because of that house. Since I was a volunteer representative of the Turkish community at the municipality, I tried to resolve those issues. Because running a study centre was very difficult, the laws in Australia were stringent, and the municipality had many regulations." That house did not fully meet the Boarding Home conditions, so there were some problems. When asked about the dormitory, Mikail responded: "I also volunteered as a liaison officer and translator with the Mascot Police Department. I became friends with the police officers. The police told me that the activities carried out in this house had a very positive impact on the Turkish youth in the area and that they saw a decrease in crime rates and positive developments.""

Upon request, Yavuz went to Melbourne that year to mentor the students at the Hudaybiyya Dormitory, a new dormitory opened. Here, students were helped with their studies and given moral and religious education after hours and weekends. The students attended public schools during the day and studied under the supervision of their mentors in the evenings. This led to their success. While extracurricular activities continued at this dormitory, some people spoke against it. Some still said, "They are instilling hatred against Atatürk," spreading such rumours. The trustees would gather at this dormitory during the weekdays. There were spiritual talks on weekends, and around 50-60 people from the local Turkish community would attend the talk. They would also support the social activities financially.

5.3. Planted Seeds

There was a wonderful spiritual atmosphere in this dormitory. One of the students expressed that in his dream, the Prophet Muhammad came to the dormitory and planted flowers in the garden. Because the dormitory was named Hafız Ali Dormitory, some students also saw Hafız Ali, a student of Master Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, in their dreams. The students staying in this dormitory would go home at the weekend and spend time with their families. The families who wanted their children to succeed in education and have good morals gladly sent them to this dormitory because they were satisfied with the educational and mentoring activities.

At that time, the number of students attending university within the Turkish community was very low. Out of curiosity, Halit asked the state education ministry how many Turks were studying at university in NSW in 1994. The answer was fifty-four. About fifty per cent of Turkish immigrants lived in NSW that year.

5.4. The Establishment of the Feza Foundation

Until that day in NSW, the Hizmet activities were individual efforts, not conducted under the name of an association or organisation. There was a small dormitory, and the idea of opening a school was also being considered. It was beneficial to have all these activities officially under an organisation. Therefore, the trustees discussed and decided to establish a foundation. Initially, they wanted to be a branch of Selimiye Foundation, which was established in Melbourne in 1992. However, that idea was abandoned due to some developments, and the Feza Foundation was established in Sydney. The foundation board included seven members. It was not a religious foundation but an educational foundation. This was necessary to receive government assistance or to allow donors to get tax returns on their donations. Until that day, Turkish Muslims had established Islamic societies or Turkish Islamic associations. These could not receive government assistance. One person recounted: They consulted a Greek Cypriot who had been in Australia for decades and spoke Turkish about establishing an Islamic society. The Greek Cypriot said, "Establish an educational foundation, not a religious one. With this educational foundation, you can still build a mosque. Or you can build a building and establish your mosque in one corner of it." However, Turks said, "No, we want to establish an Islamic society," and did not follow the Greek

Cypriot's advice. The Hizmet Movement became the first Turkish Muslim community to establish an educational foundation.

5.5. Dreams Seen Before the School Opened in Sydney

Kübra grew up in Australia and is married to a relative from Türkiye. Her husband works six days a week and spends his remaining time on Hizmet activities, leaving little time for her. Although she does not oppose her husband's dedication to Hizmet activities, she sometimes complains about the lack of time spent together. Kübra recounts:

"I had just gotten married. There were no Hizmet institutions yet. As far as I remember, it was the end of 1991. One night, I was performing the isha prayer. While in prostration, it felt like I was swiftly transported to the Kaaba on a hand-woven red carpet. I saw the Kaaba. I was not on the ground; I was in the air. I looked around, wondering why I was there. Then, again, on that red carpet prayer, I swiftly returned to Sydney. I was flying over the current site of the school. I saw greenery, farms, and sheep, and when I arrived at the land, I heard a voice saying, 'This is your land.' Then I rose from prostration." Interestingly, about three years later, Hizmet affiliates purchased the land that appeared in Kübra's dream. This land is where Amity College stands today. Before buying this land, they looked at perhaps 70-80 plots. Some were suitable for a school, but others were too expensive. Some were not suitable for school.

Kübra continues: "After the land was purchased, my husband wanted to show me. On the way, he said, 'Honey, we are getting close.' I told him, 'Go further, keep going.' Because it had been shown to me in my dream, we arrived exactly at the place shown in my dream. I said, 'This is it.' Of course, my husband was very surprised. At the time, I had that vision in a state of wakefulness; there was no talk of a school yet."

The state of wakefulness Kübra experienced had a profound impact on her. After that, she was pleased with her husband's dedication to Hizmet activities, even if it meant working day and night.

Since 1990, Hizmet Movement has been opening schools, first in Central Asia and then elsewhere. The altruism and successes achieved while opening these schools were also topics of the Hizmet affiliates' study circles in Australia.

5.6. Let's Establish a School

Hakan recalls: "Once, Garip Hoca suggested to the Feza Foundation board members, 'Let's open a school here.' Halit Bey heard this proposal and said, 'We can barely manage a small dormitory, we don't have the financial resources, how can we open a school?' Later, I visited my mother. I had never talked to her about the school before. My mother told me, 'Son, I saw a plot of land in my dream, and I was told that a school would be built on this land.' When I shared my mother's dream with the board members, we all had an emotional moment and said to ourselves, 'God willing, we will open a school.' After that, we slowly started looking for land." However, Garip Hoca did not recall his proposal.

According to Ebubekir, about three years before the school land was purchased, Alican, who came from Türkiye as a doctoral student, also saw in his dream that a school would be opened three years later and shared this with his close circle after waking up. Indeed, three years later, the school formerly known as Şule College was opened in Sydney.

The success of the Hizmet educational institutions in Türkiye and abroad inspired the Feza Foundation board to open schools in Australia. After a lengthy discussion, the board members of the Feza Foundation in Sydney decided to work on a school project. Of course, a school plot was needed first, which also required a large amount of money. According to one board member, the foundation's bank account had only about three thousand dollars when they decided to open a school.

The board members viewed the Turkish community as the source of funding. Therefore, they made extensive preparations for the fundraising event during Ramadan in 1994. The trustees themselves had to make great sacrifices first to influence the community.

5.7. The First Fundraising for the School in Sydney

One concept that the Hizmet Movement has modelled in Australia, especially among Turkish Muslims, is himmet or altruistic raising. The small business owners, professionals and all other affiliates with Hizmet donate between 5% and 50% of their annual income to educational activities. Additionally, at least 60% to 70% of the activities carried out by Hizmet Movement are done by volunteers. American academic Helen Ebough researched Hizmet's financial sources for months and documented where "the mill's water" comes from in her

book. Helen Ebough went to Türkiye, examined the source of the mill's water on-site, interviewed businessmen and women who had donated for years, and learned how they contributed to Hizmet. They trust those at the helm because they have no worldly possessions. Hizmet affiliates donate between 5% and 50% of their income. The public trusts teachers, administrators, and trustees who prioritise the project because they make the most significant sacrifices. Because they make such great sacrifices, the public sees this and provides them with financial and moral support. They give a lot themselves and encourage their surroundings and the public to help and succeed. Thus, they collect more help from the public. They feel great spiritual pleasure while doing this.[127]

In Australia, too, many people, not knowing the sacrifices made, sometimes gossiped or slandered, asking, "Where does the mill's water come from?" Some said the source of this money was Iran, some said Saudi Arabia, and some said America.

5.8. The Fundraising Program

The fundraising program is conducted similarly to how the Prophet Muhammad did before the Tabuk Expedition. He invited his companions to give openly; Abu Bakr donated all his wealth, Umar donated half, and some companions, who had no wealth, worked as porters at night and donated all their earnings.[128]. So, how does the Hizmet Movement find the money for so many institutions? What is the financial source for all these activities?

In my opinion, there are three primary sources for financing these activities and making most of these institutions self-sufficient. First, the financial sacrifices made by Hizmet volunteers. I gave a few examples above. There are probably tens of thousands of similar examples. I hope that these will be written in the future as lessons for future generations. Second, the voluntary work done by teachers and Hizmet volunteers, especially in the initial stages. Third, once these institutions become successful within two to three years, wealthy families send their children to these successful schools for a substantial fee, allowing the school to operate with its resources.

127 The Gülen Movement: A Sociological Analysis of a Civic Movement Rooted in Moderate Islam, Springer, 2009.

128 M. Asım Köksal, İslam Tarihi, s 870...https://archive.org/details/islam-tarihi-asim-koksal-tum/page/n875/mode/2up?q=Teb%C3%BCk

5.9. A Blessing Dinner for Fundraising

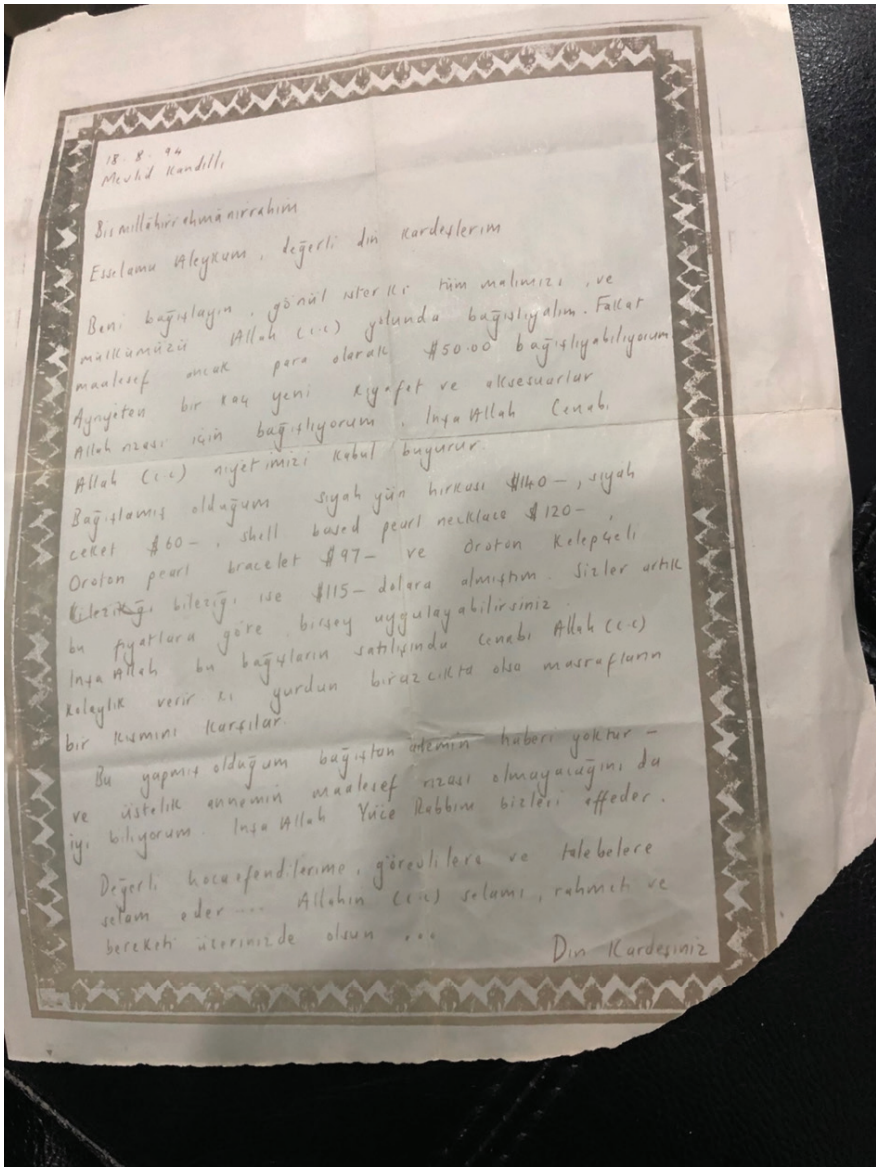
As preparations for fundraising continued before and during Ramadan, one of the board members of the Feza Foundation asked his wife to prepare an iftar dinner for 100 people. The Feza trustees were expecting about 100 people for the fundraising iftar dinner. Kübra, the wife of a board member, recalled: "It was Ramadan in 1994. My husband came and asked me to prepare an iftar dinner for 80-100 people. I had just given birth. My baby was 2-3 weeks old. The birth was by caesarean section. Additionally, I had asthma. I wasn't feeling well at all. I didn't even have pots and plates to cook for so many people at home. I was walking around the house with an oxygen tank. Because of my asthma, I needed to take oxygen to feel comfortable. It had a long hose. I attached the hose and cooked the iftar meal in the kitchen. At the same time, my postnatal pains were continuing. I prepared that meal under those difficult conditions.

Something very unusual happened. My baby was 2-3 weeks old and slept 18 hours that day. Honestly, I was surprised. How can a baby sleep for 18 hours without waking up? I would go to check on the baby every hour. Why isn't this baby waking up? I would worry. Did the baby die? But I checked the baby and looked at its hands and arms. The baby was sleeping soundly. I prepared the meal for that day. But I had a feeling inside me that while preparing that meal, it was as if some people were helping me. I felt that the house was not empty."

Kübra prepared the meal, and her husband took it to the dormitory for the iftar dinner to be served before the fundraising event. That evening, the meal was served at the Iftar dinner.

5.10. The Anonymous Letter That Made Everyone Cry at the Fundraising

Ebubekir recounts: " We had a small dormitory in the Mascot district of Sydney. We were going to hold our first fundraising meeting at this dormitory. A package was sent to our dormitory about a week before this fundraising meeting. Inside the package was a letter. Judging by the Turkish, it was written by a woman who grew up here. It was written on the day of Mevlit Kandili (the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad) in broken Turkish. The letter read as follows:"



18. 8. 94
Mevlid Kandili

Bismillahirrahmanirrahim

Esselamu Aleykum, değerli Din Kardeşlerim

Beni bağışlayın, gönül isterdi tüm malımızı, ve mülkümüzü Allah (c.c) yolunda bağışlıyalım. Fakat maalesef ancak para olarak $50.00 bağışlıyabiliyorum. Aynıyeten bir kaç yeni kıyafet ve aksesuarlar Allah rızası için bağışlıyorum. İnşa Allah Cenabı Allah (c.c) niyetimizi kabul buyurur.

Bağışlamış olduğum siyah yün hırkası $140 –, siyah ceket $60 –, shell based pearl necklace $120 –, Oroton pearl bracelet $97 – ve Oroton Kelepçeli kilezigi bileziği ise $115 – dolara almıştım. Sizler artık bu fiyatlara göre birşey uygulayabilirsiniz. İnşa Allah bu bağışların satılışında Cenabı Allah (c.c) kolaylık verir ki yurdun biraz çıkta olsa masraflarını bir kısmını karşılar.

Bu yapmış olduğum bağıştan ötemin haberi yoktur – ve üstelik annemin maalesef rızası olmayacağını da iyi biliyorum. İnşa Allah Yüce Rabbim bizleri affeder.

Değerli hocaefendilerime, görevlilere ve talebelere selam eder.... Allahın (c.c) selamı, rahmeti ve bereketi üzerinizde olsun ...

Din Kardeşiniz

The Copy of Anonymous Letter Sent to the Dormitory

The content of the above letter, which is written on the Prophet, is as follows:
Mevlit Kandili, 18.8.94

Bismillahirrahmanirrahim

Essalamu aleyküm,

My Dear brothers in faith,

Please forgive me. I wish we could donate all our possessions in the way of Allah, but unfortunately, I can only donate 50 dollars in cash. Additionally, I am donating a few new clothes and accessories for the sake of Allah. I hope Allah accepts our intentions. The black wool cardigan I am donating cost 140 dollars, the black jacket 60 dollars, the shell-based pearl 120 dollars, the Oraton pearl bracelet 97 dollars, and the Oraton clasp bracelet 115 dollars. You can use these prices as a reference, inshallah. May Allah make it easy for you to sell these donations and cover some of the dormitory's expenses. My family is unaware of this donation, and I know my mother would disapprove. I hope the Almighty forgives us. I greet the esteemed teachers, staff, and students, and may Allah's peace, mercy, and blessings be upon you.

Your Sister in Faith

The sender of this package, which included clothes, money, and the letter, was unknown. When Garip Hoca read this letter at the fundraising event, nearly 50 attendees were moved to tears. The verse states, "If you disclose your charitable expenditures, they are good; but if you conceal them and give them to the poor, it is better for you, and He will remove from you some of your misdeeds [thereby]. And Allah, with what you do, is [fully] Acquainted." (Al-Baqarah 2:271).

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, "The best charity is that given by one who has little but gives it secretly to the poor."[129] Another famous hadith states, "On the Day of Judgment, Allah will shade seven people with His shade, when there is no shade but His. One of them is a person who

129 Kanz al-Ummal, hadith number 16250.

gives charity so secretly that his left-hand does not know what his right hand has given."[130] In another hadith, it is said, "Secret charity extinguishes the wrath of the Lord."[131]

This woman is an unknown hero. Allah used her to accomplish many good deeds.

5.11. Garip Hoca's Remarks on the First Fundraising

"I took the above heartfelt letter to the fundraising dinner. I aimed to read this letter during my speech at the donation dinner. The Feza Foundation had a large fundraising meeting. About 45-50 people attended, including some university students, a few middle-class businesspeople, eight to ten professionals, a few retirees, and about ten blue-collar workers. I was asked to give a short speech. After a brief talk on the importance of education and donations, I read this letter that had been sent a few days earlier. After hearing the letter, many people at the meeting could not hold back their tears. A middle-class businessman named Ömer pledged 50,000 dollars. Another pledged 35,000. After that, everyone contributed.

Abu Bekir said, 'As Feza Foundation volunteers, we divided into four groups. We visited hundreds of Turkish people at their homes and asked them to support the school project financially. Some claimed that we were chasing a dream. According to them, our community could not establish a school. These efforts were all considered practical prayers. We also saw the support of our community, alhamdulillah. We went to some wealthy people, but they did not contribute financially. However, while making these visits, we found financial support from unexpected people."

5.12. The Student Who Donated All His Money

Garip Hoca recalled the following about the fundraising: "A doctoral student brought about 300 dollars in cash with tears in his eyes. He was crying. He also pledged to donate 1000 dollars. I knew this student. He received a monthly scholarship of around 750-800 dollars and had to pay rent and care for his wife and two children. I asked him, 'How much money did you leave in your bank account?' He said, 'Just one dollar. I didn't want my account to be closed.'

130 Bukhari, Adhan 36, Zakat 16.

131 Tirmidhi, Zakât 28

Another person brought all his savings, leaving only ten dollars in the bank. Another doctoral student pledged to donate 20% of his annual scholarship. A week earlier, he had borrowed 100 dollars from me to send a gift to his brother in Türkiye. With tears in his eyes, he donated 1000 dollars. Two weeks later, he received a 10,000-dollar scholarship from the University of Wollongong. When this student called me joyfully to share the good news, I reminded him of this verse from the Qur'an: 'Whoever brings a good deed will have ten times the like thereof...' (Al-An'am, 6:160). Thus, he donated 1000 dollars, and Allah gave him ten times that amount.

Someone working at Optus phone company pledged 2000 dollars. Later, I learned from his father that he had sold his furniture to cover the donation because he had lost his job and had no income. An undergraduate student donated 2000 dollars. One year, I remember an elementary school student bringing 120 dollars from his piggy bank savings. Almost all the board members donated between 20-30% of their annual income.

The total pledge amount was around 600,000 dollars. This was an unprecedented event in the history of the Turkish community in Australia. It was a historic moment. There was a very peaceful spiritual atmosphere. Some people said they felt 'the scent of paradise' at the iftar dinner. That heartfelt letter softened and moved everyone's hearts. I was truly surprised by such a high donation amount. The board members and volunteers were motivated by such a large amount. One board member had a hole in his shoe. He wasn't buying new shoes because he wanted to donate all his income to the school. He continued to donate most of his income the following year as well. Such a level of sacrifice was unbelievable, especially in a materialistic society."

Garip Hoca mentioned that a university student pledged 3000 dollars at that day's fundraising. This amount was almost half of the student's annual scholarship from the government. Garip Hoca visited some wealthy people with a few others and even went to the richest Turk, but they couldn't get even 1000 dollars from him.

5.13. Ebubekir's Recollections of That Day's Fundraising

"About 50 people attended that day's fundraising meeting. We gathered on the upper floor of the small dormitory. After a short talk, the above letter was read. Both the reader and most of the listeners cried while the letter was being read. Honestly, this letter motivated all of us a lot. We didn't know who wrote it,

and we still don't. As far as I remember, about 50 people pledged or promised to find around 600,000 dollars at that day's event. There were no prominent businessmen among these 50 people. As far as I remember, there were seven or eight middle-class businessmen, 15-20 people working in various places, and the rest were university and high school students. For example, when someone said they would donate 20,000 dollars, they also said they would find 30,000.

Even though it was the first collective fundraising, there was excitement about a newly started dormitory. On the other hand, people were already prepared for the school project. It was a heartfelt fundraising event. That fundraising was the first significant collective fundraising in Sydney. Before that, we had small fundraisings with 3-5 people. I pledged 40,000 at that fundraising. At that time, I was working for 250 dollars a week. Of course, I would find most of the money I promised. As far as I remember, I would give 5000 dollars myself. I was going to find the rest by visiting people and asking for their help.

Abu Bekir was going to find 35,000 dollars by visiting the Turkish shop owners and going door to door. In those years, at the Eid prayers in Auburn Gallipoli Mosque, attended by maybe four thousand people, the most that could be collected was 30-40 thousand dollars. If people don't believe, they can't even imagine collecting that much. Since he gave about 40% of his annual income, Abu Bekir's words would have an impact, and he would find a large part of what he promised. If you had asked people that day, they would have said he was crazy. Yes, he had become crazy in the way of Allah. Only someone like him could understand him. They asked Rumi, 'How can we understand you?' He replied, 'When you become like me.[132]' To understand Abu Bekir, you need to be like him."

5.14. Allah's Grace

After the fundraising dinner, everyone felt a heavenly scent and seemed very happy. The sacrifices made that day were significant enough to go down in history. A Bosnian friend who had studied in Türkiye pledged 5000 dollars to the fundraising and paid it as soon as possible. He had just started a new job

132 Dīvān-e Shams-e Tabrīzī" (The Collected Poems of Shams of Tabriz), specifically in ghazal (poem) number 2733 in William C. Chittick, The Sufi Path of Love: The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi, State University of New York,1983.

and was saving that money to buy a second-hand car for himself. He hesitated at first about whether to give the money or not. Later, he brought all the money he had saved and donated it. He recounted: "When I went to work the next day, the company owner told me, 'We will buy you a new car, and you can also use it for your personal needs.' I was going to buy a second-hand car, but the company bought me a new one. I do not doubt that this was a blessing from Allah."

Abu Huraira (may Allah be pleased with him) reported that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) said: "Charity does not decrease wealth. No one forgives another except that Allah increases his honour, and no one humbles himself for the sake of Allah except that Allah raises his status."[133] One of the board members who attended that day was Ali Özkan. He and Hacı Rahmi ran tirelessly for the Hizmet activities until their last breath. Both passed away from cancer. May Allah have mercy on them.

Ebu Bekir recalls: "In early years, we had Hizmet affiliates who donated a third or even half of their salaries. Once, we had to pay off the debt for the school land, but we were short on funds. Abdulhalim, who was getting married a week later, brought 8000 dollars and donated it. He gave his wedding money to pay off the land debt for the school. Indeed, our financial means were limited at that time, but I saw that friends made great sacrifices. We didn't have wealthy people among us. No one left an inheritance. But, alhamdulillah, our work always progressed. We struggled but succeeded. During the establishment and early years of the school, we would go door to door asking people for money."

Ebubekir continues: "I cannot forget the financial altruism of a friend named Alim that day. He contributed significantly. I can't remember the exact amount now. We asked for loans during challenging times, and people trusted and lent us money. Once, the school had a debt of 80,000. I called a few acquaintances and asked for a loan. When I called another friend, he said, 'I have 80,000 dollars to collect from somewhere. If I can get it, I will give it to you.' He collected 60,000 dollars from the place he had lent it to and lent us that money. There were many such coincidences. We can overcome financial difficulties with Allah's grace and generosity whenever we face them. Sometimes, we could pay off our debts through loans and the sacrifices of Hizmet affiliates. These institutions were established without a single dollar

133 Müslim, Birr 69. Tirmidhi, Birr 82.

coming from Türkiye. They were established with the contributions of friends and our community here."

5.15. Hizmet Taught Us to Give

Ebubekir says: "Whenever we faced financial difficulties in the early years, Allah would open doors when we made an effort. Some people trusted us so much that they would bring and lend us money. These loans helped us breathe easier during difficult times. We struggled, but in the end, it worked out. I can say that Hizmet taught us to give. At every fundraising event, I would pledge a high amount. Later, I would sometimes wonder how I would give it. But Allah always granted me the ability to give the amount I pledged. We became the giving hand, not the receiving hand. We heard from our teachers in the talks. The verse 'Whoever spends in the way of Allah, Allah will replace it'(Qur'an, 34:39) was our motto. I saw many vivid examples of this. The more we gave; the more Allah gave us in return. In fact, Australia became a model for other Hizmet activities worldwide in some aspect."

5.16. First Stage: Purchasing the School's Land

Despite all their efforts, they could not find a plot of land within their budget and close to the community. At times, they even felt hopeless.

Garip Hoca recounts: "Once, I was going to give a talk at the dormitory. I hadn't had the chance to prepare for the talk. I pulled a book from the bookshelf in the living room, saying 'Bismillah,' and opened it. I started reading aloud. The book mentioned a dream of a Hizmet affiliate had in France in 1991. In his dream, he and Fethullah Gülen Hoca Efendi went to Sydney. Many people, including Australian converts to Islam, welcomed them at the airport. They then went to a school established by the Hizmet Movement. The affiliate who had the dream wrote a poem on the blackboard with a piece of chalk." When Garip Hoca read this dream from the book, he and those present became more hopeful about opening a school. Indeed, this dream would eventually come true. After months of searching, they found a suitable plot of land in Prestons.

Hakim, one of the board members, had passed by this plot of land many times in the last six months. When he saw the 'For Sale' sign, he called the real estate agent to inquire about the land's price and size. He learned that the land was seven acres and priced at 500,000 dollars, an impossible amount for the Feza Foundation to afford. They were looking for a plot of two to three acres.

About six months later, Hakim passed by the land again and wondered if the price was still the same. The real estate agent said the owner wanted to sell it in instalments. Additionally, the price had dropped to 487,000. The land was located at 163 Kurrajong Road in Prestons. Hakim brought the matter to the board. After lengthy discussions, the board decided to purchase it. A down payment was made, and the deed transfer was to be completed within six weeks. A week before the deed transfer, the landowner's lawyer called the Feza Foundation's lawyer and said they wanted to change the contract. The foundation was to pay 87,000 dollars upfront and the remaining 400,000 dollars interest-free a year later. This was excellent news for them. It meant they could open the school first and then raise funds. The board members accepted this offer without hesitation.

Later, they learned that the landowner was a wealthy man with tax issues. His accountant had advised him to sell the land interest-free to a charity. The board members saw this as a divine favour. The real estate agent told Hakim, "We have had this land for sale for six months, but no one even asked about the price. You were the first to want to buy it." Only after the contract was signed did some people call to inquire about the land. Board member Mikail speculated that the landowner wanted to sell the land quickly because he was likely aware of a road construction project for the Sydney Olympics that would pass through the land.

Finally, the land was purchased. On the first Sunday after buying the land, the board members and all the volunteers gathered on the land and had breakfast there. Afterwards, they started clearing the bushes and some trees. A Lebanese man, a friend of a board member who owned construction equipment, helped with the clearing almost for free. One-third of the land was cleared, the bushes were removed, and some trees were cut down. This part of the land was practically ready for laying the foundation.

While some board members were trying to get permission from Liverpool Council to open the school and set up temporary buildings, other board members were working on infrastructure on the land.

Garip Hoca recalls: "The board members submitted the plan to Liverpool Council. At the first session, some objections came from the neighbours. There were no houses around the land, only a seven-acre plot adjacent to our land with a house belonging to a former council member. This person was unhappy about a school opening next to his land and lobbied against it. One day, there

was a heavy rain. The land was flooded. The meteorology department said it was the heaviest rain in Sydney in the last 99 years. The former council member put on his boots and published a news article opposing Liverpool Council's approval in the local newspaper. He indicated that the Liverpool Council permitted land where there was flood risk. Mikail met with him and explained who we were, our purpose and that the value of his land would increase when the school opened. Other neighbours objected, thinking it would be an Islamic school. We told them we were not an Islamic school. However, we did not get permission on our first attempt. The application was postponed for about a month to be reconsidered."

Garip Hoca continues, "A month later, one of our donors wanted to take me to the council meeting for the Feza Foundation's application. When I got into his car, he started the engine, and the cassette was playing verses 5 and 6 from Surah Al-Inshirah (94th surah) of the Qur'an: 'Indeed, with hardship [will be] ease. Indeed, with hardship [will be] ease.' I asked the donor if he had intentionally played this surah. He said no. I told him this couldn't be a coincidence. There are over 6200 verses in the Qur'an. I think we will get permission today because it says, 'With hardship [will be] ease.' (Qur'an, 94:5). We supplicated along the way. Mikail wisely answered all the questions, including those from the neighbours. Thank Allah, we got permission to open a school on that land. Some board members shed tears of joy. If we hadn't gotten the permission, it wouldn't have been possible to open the school in February 1996. Later, the former council member who opposed the school and lobbied against it was fined for doing some work on his land without Liverpool Council's approval and for polluting the soil." The board members saw this as another divine favour. They had approached this person kindly, but he continued his complaints about the school land for a while. However, Mikail continued to maintain a dialogue with him. Eventually, he also became a friend.

5.17. A Great Risk

After purchasing the school land, the Feza board received news that a new road would be built for the Sydney Olympics. This road was planned to pass right through the middle of the land they had bought for the school. The board members later learned that a large construction company across from the school land had lobbied for the road to pass through Feza Foundation's

land instead of their own. In response, Mikail from the Feza board took some personal initiatives. Despite their young age, Şakir and Abdulhalim also arranged meetings with relevant bureaucrats to prevent the road from passing through their land. The bureaucrats were initially surprised to see these two young men. Şakir and Abdulhalim reminded them that they had bought this land and promised the community to open a school. They explained that if the road passed through the middle of the land, the Turkish community's dream would be shattered, as this school would be the first one established by the Turkish community in Australia. After considering these reasons, the board members and volunteers shared Surah Al-Fath, recited Salat-ı Tafrijiyya, and performed salat haja prayer with tears, pleading to Allah.

Board member Mikail met with local MPs, bureaucrats, and relevant officials to explain the situation. However, it seemed like they were losing the battle. The board and volunteers held a meeting and discussed the problem again but couldn't find a solution. They performed Tasbih prayers and prayed. They were in a desperate situation. People had donated, and they had promised to open a school. The failure of the school project would be a disaster for the Feza Foundation and would demoralise all members and volunteers.

Garip recalls: "After the tasbih prayer, we made a long supplication with tears, asking for Allah's help. At that stage, there was nothing else we could do. A few days later, we received news that the M7 motorway plan had changed and only one-third of the land would be taken. This meant we could still build the school on the remaining part of the land. The motorway plan changed again a few months later, and we completely preserved the school land. The motorway would pass next to it." Interestingly, the prominent architectural company that lobbied for the road to pass through Feza Foundation's land went bankrupt 5-6 months later. Alvarlı Efe Hazretleri says:

"If you flow like rivers and cry like Ya'qub,

If you burn your heart, won't He ask about your state?

Look at the beloved with your heart and soul,

Turn your face to the threshold, won't your prayer be accepted?"

Yes, the Hizmet affiliates pleaded with Allah with tears, and Allah accepted their prayers.

Hakan recounts: "Şakir and I met with the relevant state officials to discuss road plan and school land. At that time, they were making 50-year and even 100-year plans. They were also preparing for pilot projects and creating the necessary infrastructure. The officials said, 'A road might pass through this land.' I clearly remember asking, 'Could this road pass like this?' while making a curve with my hand. Fate had it that the road later passed precisely over the curve I drew with my hand behind the land.

After meeting with the officials, they presented us with three alternatives. One of these alternatives involved the road passing through the middle of the land. I was very worried at that time. I wondered, 'How will I explain this to Hizmet affiliates and the board members?' Halit and I were brainstorming on the land. We planned that if part of it went to the road, we would leave the lower part as a sports field and build the buildings on the upper part. We discussed among ourselves that if the road passed, it would only pass through the sports field.

We submitted reports to the council about opening a school. However, initially, the bureaucrats said, 'A school cannot be established there.' They added, 'This is a flood zone, it will flood.' By chance, that year was the year with the most rain in the last 99 years, and indeed, the entire land was filled with water. The council's attitude and opinion saddened us greatly.

While our plan was being discussed at the council, the local MP Paul Lynch, who was present that day, suggested: 'Let's give them temporary permission to open the school. They can open the school. Later, when they find a suitable place, they can move the school there.' None of the council members opposed his suggestion, and the proposal was accepted this way."

Garip Hoca says, "We believed that Allah accepted our prayers. The company that lobbied against us went bankrupt the same year. The road did not pass through the school land but nearby. There was a plot of land between the road and the school. The Feza Foundation later bought this land from the local government, which is now used as a parking lot."

5.18. The Groundbreaking Ceremony of Şüle College

Garip Hoca recalls: "The construction of the school in Prestons was the Feza Foundation's most significant project. Before the official groundbreaking

ceremony, the board members and volunteers gathered on the land in late 1995. We wanted to break ground symbolically with a prayer before the official ceremony. Since I was older than the other board members and an imam, they gave me the task of breaking the ground first. I thought I didn't deserve this task; others could do it. When the board members insisted, I broke the ground.

However, in the second year, they wanted me to break the ground for the main building again. I looked around and saw Erdinç, the seven-year-old cousin of board member Tahir. He was like an angel. He deserved to start this task more than I did. I gave him the pickaxe and asked him to say 'Bismillah' and break the ground; he struck the ground first. Then, we said a short prayer together. Everyone was very excited.

Erdinç later enrolled in Süle College. When his mother passed away, he left school and went to Türkiye. He became a businessman. On the first day of 2016, he was caught in a terrorist attack at a New Year's reception in Istanbul. He was there at the time but survived by playing dead. Thirty-seven people died in that attack. Later, he was killed by the mafia while doing business in Colombia. The cause of his death is still a mystery. A few days before he was killed, he sent a message to his uncle saying he wanted to come to Sydney and serve the community. It took a few days to bring his body back. He was buried next to his mother. I led the funeral prayer and couldn't hold back my tears."

5.19. Intensive Work and a Board Member's Dream

One of the board members recounts: "After clearing the land, we started looking for two portable buildings. New ones were expensive; new portable buildings cost around 40,000 dollars each. We couldn't afford new buildings, so we had to look for second-hand ones. Board member Mikail found two used portable buildings belonging to a church. We bought these used buildings for 6000 dollars. It took some time to move and place the portable buildings on the land because we needed temporary approval from the council. After the landscaping work was completed, the portable buildings were ready."

It was Ramadan, the longest day of the year in Australia. Most board members and some volunteers worked on weekends while fasting, painting the old portable buildings, preparing the playground, and building the road from the main street to the school. We didn't have the money to pay contractors and workers. Board member Serhan had a small construction company. Serhan brought a few workers from his company to work at the school. He

also donated a significant amount of money to the school; I believe it was more than 10,000 dollars in 1995.

The board members decided to hold a spiritual program at Hacı Rahmi's house in Eastlakes after the Tarawih prayer. They would read books, perform voluntary prayer Tahajjud, and spend time together until Suhoor. When the Tarawih prayer ended around 11 PM, Serhan went home to rest.

Serhan told me, "I went home and lay down. At that moment, I received a call from Halit. He invited me to Hacı Rahmi's house in Eastlakes, about a 45-minute drive away. Initially, I didn't want to go because I wanted to rest, but when Halit said they had decided at the board meeting to get together for the weekly Ramadan program, I couldn't say no and went to Hacı Rahmi's house. As a contractor working with labourers, I had to leave early. Around 2 AM, I asked for permission and returned home for Suhoor. After the Fajr prayer, I went back to sleep. That night, I had an exciting dream. In my dream, a staircase led up a hill, and people were climbing it. I was curious and asked where they were going. They replied, 'We are going to Hajj.' I was moved and thought, 'I should go too,' and started climbing the stairs. However, the stairs were slippery, and I fell, seeing pus flowing from my body. I felt awful about not being able to go to Hajj and my condition, thinking I wished I had died before seeing this. Suddenly, the Prophet Muhammad appeared in my dream. He wiped the pus from my body and said, 'My son, now you can go to Hajj.' I woke up in tears and couldn't sleep again that night." Such dreams usually served as a great source of motivation for the board members and volunteers.

One day, a Turkish woman passing by saw the board members working voluntarily under the sun while fasting. She couldn't believe such altruism. When she got home, she sent a check for $20,000. While working intensively, the board members also donated significantly to the school's construction.

5.20. Where is Your Father?

We used the word "himmet" in Turkish to refer to fundraising. "Himmet" is also a male name in Turkish. Garip Hoca recounts: "Once, I picked up my son from the mosque and took him home. Before dropping him off, I told him, 'If your mother asks where I am, tell her I went to himmet.' A while later, someone called our home phone and asked for me. My seven-year-old son Mehmet, who answered the phone, said, 'My dad is not home; he went

to Uncle Himmet's house.' Thus, my son confused the word 'himmet,' which means donation, with a male name."

Şule College in Its First Year (1996)

5.21. The Most Exciting Day: The School's Opening

The Feza Foundation board and volunteers meticulously completed preparations for the opening day. Two prefabricated buildings, consisting of two classrooms, a small library, a principal's office, and a secretary's office, were ready. The playground, a small parking lot, a gravel road, and newly planted trees and flowers completed the scene.

Despite some promotional efforts, the school's visibility was limited. Being a new school, it wasn't well-known, and the distance from the community was a barrier for some families considering enrolling their children. The board members and volunteers embarked on a two-week campaign, visiting families personally despite all obstacles. As a result of their altruism and hard work, 32 students from kindergarten to 3rd grade were enrolled.

Opening Invitations were sent to a broad audience, including Prime Minister Paul Keating, Opposition Leader John Howard, local MPs, the Mayor of Liverpool, council members, community leaders, parents, and members of the Turkish community. A large tent was secured in case of rain. A large crowd of about four thousand people gathered.

Although Prime Minister Keating couldn't attend due to his busy election schedule, he sent a congratulatory letter, which Werriwa MP Mark Latham read. The letter mentioned that Keating had to prepare for a televised debate with John Howard but that Mark Latham would represent him. Opposition Leader John Howard also sent a representative and congratulated the board members on the phone.

The Mayor of Liverpool, local MPs, council members, and community leaders from various backgrounds attended. The national anthems of Australia and Türkiye echoed with enthusiasm. All the board members and volunteers were thrilled to see the fruits of their efforts and thanked Allah. The official opening ceremony was a great success.

During the opening ceremony, I noticed the oldest board member, Hacı Rahmi Çetiner, humbly picking up trash around the area. A volunteer was meticulously cleaning the toilets. The snacks served after the ceremony created a festive atmosphere. Hizmet affiliates and some attendants had tears of joy, profoundly expressing the day's significance.

Şule College opened its doors to its first students in February 1996, with 32 students from kindergarten to 3rd grade. The following year, the college enrolled 282 students from kindergarten to 7th grade. The college continued to grow rapidly and expanded its educational services by opening a single-class primary school in the Illawarra region in 1999. Due to high demand from the community, another primary school was opened in the Auburn district in 2001.

Over the years, the high-quality education offered by the college attracted the interest of the broader community, leading to the enrolment of many students and teachers from diverse backgrounds. Thus, Şule College became a multicultural family with over 3000 students from more than 40 nationalities. The diversity among the students and teachers led the school board to consider changing the school's name to one that embraced all segments of the community. After extensive consultations with the community and stakeholders, the school's name was changed to Amity College. "Amity" means friendship, peaceful harmony, and mutual understanding, which reflect the school's core values.

5.22. The Principal's Altruism

One of the board members remembers: "Halit had completed his doctorate and was the first principal of Şule College. The school's budget was limited. There were two teachers, a principal, and a volunteer secretary. Halit worked as a volunteer for eight months. He slept on a sofa bed in his office for about eight months because he couldn't afford rent. Unfortunately, the foundation couldn't cover the rent. Once, Halit called me, saying the school didn't have enough money to pay the two teachers' salaries for two weeks. A donation of 1000 dollars was found for this purpose. Later, the school collected student fees and could pay the teachers' salaries. In the following years, the principal received a much lower salary than other principals in Australia. He also made significant donations to the school where he worked. He volunteered many extra hours after school, on weekends, and during school holidays. I estimate he volunteered at least 20 extra hours. He also managed all volunteer activities and school projects. The principal used an old car until he left Australia because he donated so much to the school and couldn't afford a new car."

In the first year, the school was cleaned by volunteers. Two bus drivers also worked as volunteers, and the number of volunteers reached about 45.

According to Australian laws, a newly opened school has to operate with its financial resources for two years. However, John Howard won the elections that year and his government changed this law. New schools could receive financial support from the federal and local governments immediately after being established, which relieved the management of Şule College. The following year, the number of students increased from 32 to 282. Such a significant increase was probably unprecedented in Australian history. It would have been impossible to accept so many students without government support.

5.23. Sacrifices of the Board Members and Volunteers

One of the board members recounts: "The board members tried to reach as many people as possible. Once, they visited the richest Turk in Sydney. They explained the school project and asked for financial support. The wealthy Turk told them several times that he had donated 1000 dollars to the Auburn Mosque. He gave advice but did not provide any financial support. While he mentioned his donation to the mosque, I thought about how blessed we were with such dedicated board members and volunteers. A university student

had donated 3000 dollars. Other small business owners had donated between 10,000 and 30,000 dollars."

Garip Hoca recounts: "On another occasion, I visited a middle-class businessman. I talked about the school project. He listened with excitement. I thought he would donate around 1000 dollars. However, he donated 15,000 dollars. I couldn't hold back my tears of joy. The following year, he donated 20,000 dollars. He continued this support for years. I think it was 2015 when he donated 80,000 dollars."

5.24. You Must Be Crazy

One of the board members recounts: "One day I will never forget, I visited a businessman with a board member. We explained the school project. He listened and told us, 'You must be crazy. How will you accomplish such a big project with such a small group?' His words demoralised us, and we couldn't get a single penny. The board member and I were very upset. We lost our morale and couldn't believe how such a wealthy person didn't help. I went to the Redfern Mosque and prayed the evening prayer a bit late. During the prayer, I felt the scent of paradise. I thanked Allah for these blessings and prayed for His help."

This board member donated about 20% of his income. Since then, Allah helped him establish his business, and he continued to donate to educational projects.

5.25. Busy but No Complaints

Every board member and volunteer dedicated hours to Hizmet voluntarily. Some worked at least twenty-five hours, some twenty hours, and at least ten hours a week as volunteers. They worked on fundraising, developing good relations with the community, educating the youth through study groups, visiting those in need, and travelling out of state.

One board member recounts: "We all had to read a certain number of Quran pages, Jawshan, and the Prophet's prayers, perform voluntary prayers, and do volunteer work in addition to our daily jobs to support our families. Sometimes, I would read my Jawshan while waiting at a red light in traffic. This way, I wouldn't waste even 30-40 seconds and always carry it with me."

5.26. Distress and Coincidence

A board member recalls: "The Feza Foundation had purchased the land. The foundation had to pay 400,000 dollars by the end of the year. We had to find this money from the community. But how? I had been an imam for nearly nine years and had built a good network in Sydney, knowing many people. The board members had high expectations of me for fundraising. I was doing my best, but there was still a long way to go. On the other hand, since it was the school's first year, the foundation also had to support its expenses. I would visit many people, but sometimes I couldn't collect a single penny all day. Some people didn't welcome us and sometimes said things that demoralised us. On such a day, I was very upset and said to myself, 'That's enough, I can't do this anymore.' I went to Auburn Mosque. It wasn't prayer time, and no one was there. I prayed two rak'ahs salat for the sake of Allah, asked for His help, and couldn't hold back my tears. Then, I opened the Quran randomly and started reading. Interestingly, I opened Surah Ibrahim. The first page I read had this verse that motivated me to continue: 'And He gave you from all you asked of Him. And if you should count the favour of Allah, you could not enumerate them. Indeed, mankind is [generally] most unjust and ungrateful.' (Qur'an,14:34).

I felt that this verse addressed me. Yes, we had asked Allah for many things, and He always gave. But it was impossible to count Allah's blessings on us and personally on me. I asked for forgiveness from Allah, the Most Forgiving, and continued to find donors for the school.

5.27. Hudeybiye Dormitory: The Birthplace of Schools

Hudeybiye Student Dormitory holds a significant spiritual place as it was the first institution established in Australia, and Hoca Efendi laid the foundation. Many students lived in this dormitory while continuing their study at local secondary or high schools. During my research, I spoke with some students who lived there. Some cried while recounting their days at the dormitory. As explained in previous sections, I found that the Prophet Muhammad visited this place multiple times in the dreams of both board members who volunteered there and the students who helped the students in the dormitory at night. Additionally, most students who lived in this dormitory became good Muslims and citizens.

After finishing primary school, Alim's father enrolled him in the dormitory. The dormitory followed a structured program: The dormitory manager Eren would come before the morning prayer and, along with the resident supervisors, wake the students for the prayer. After the prayer, a short supplication was made. Then everyone would return to their rooms to rest. At 7:30 AM, they would wake up again, have breakfast, prepare for school, and go to school. After returning from school, there was a short "free time" for each student. During this time, they could take a shower and change clothes. Then, they would perform the afternoon prayer in the congregation, followed by a supplication. After each prayer, there was a short talk. After the prayer supplication, there were short talks about the life of the Prophet Muhammad or his companions. Then, they would play sports in the backyard of the dormitory. Depending on the season, they would either have dinner first and then perform the evening prayer; if it was winter, they would perform the evening prayer first and then have dinner. After dinner, there was a study hour. Each student would gather in the classroom to do their homework, with the supervisors and the dormitory manager helping them.

Alim recounted that he missed those days so much, saying he spent the best days and months of his life in the dormitory. While recounting his memories, he seemed to relive those days and couldn't hold back his tears. "Our dormitory manager, Eren and our supervisors, Yavuz and Osman, took great care of us. The dormitory manager sometimes acted as a father, sometimes as a mother or as a friend, helping us. He would stay at the dormitory almost every night until 11 PM, taking care of us individually. Now I think about it, the dormitory manager was married, and his child had just been born. He should have been spending time with his family, but he dedicated most of his time to us. He would go home only after we went to bed. I now see them as people who followed the example of the Prophet's companions. They put in a lot of effort and helped us a lot. On weekends, we would engage in various sports activities, sometimes with our manager, sometimes with the supervisors guiding us."

Alim continued, "There was a very beautiful spiritual atmosphere in the dormitory. I can't forget the altruism of the board members and volunteers. For example, Ensar, Halis, the late Kubilay, and Fahrettin uncles, and others would come, clean the dormitory, cook our meals, and help us. These uncles would come after work at five and stay until late at night. Our manager, supervisors, board members and volunteers made us love the Prophet and his companions

through their actions. When I think about their sacrifices now, I realise how great they were."

Alim added, "Most of the students who lived in the dormitory loved Allah and the Prophet very much, strengthened their faith, and most of them still perform their prayers. Some graduated from university, some didn't, but they continue their lives as good Muslims and good citizens. We stay in touch with most of them, we have WhatsApp groups, and we get together for iftar during Ramadan. Some are in different communities, some have different political views, but we have love and affection for each other."

When I asked Alim if he had any dreams while living in the dormitory, he replied: "Sometimes, we would watch movies with the supervisors. We watched the movie 'The Message,' which is about the life of the Prophet Muhammad, many times. One night, I dreamed that the students and our supervisors were dressed in white, with our imam leading us, walking around a mountain. As we walked, the music from 'The Message' played, the same music that played when the Prophet entered Mecca in the movie."

Alim also mentioned that when our dormitory manager, Eren Bey, came from Türkiye, he started working at the dormitory immediately without resting. He was a role model for us. Eren and the mentors taught us the life of the Prophet and his companions, which deeply affected all of us. Almost all the students who lived in the dormitory maintained piety in their lives, except for a few. Their families had sent them to the dormitory for educational and spiritual purposes, but for other reasons.

Turhan was enrolled in the dormitory by his family when he was thirteen. He lived in the dormitory from 1995 to 1998. Turhan said, "There were some difficulties in the dormitory, but nothing negative. I can't forget the sacrifices made by our manager, mentors, and board members, who left a mark on me. I had two older brothers at home, but they didn't play with me because of the age difference. My parents had some difficulties with them as they were the first generation. They didn't want to experience the same difficulties as me, so they enrolled me in the dormitory. After coming to the dormitory, I made many friends my age. The students in the dormitory were paired as brothers. I was paired with Alim, who slept in the same room and bunk bed as me. Our brotherhood continues beautifully to this day. We formed a beautiful brotherhood in the dormitory. Our manager, supervisors, and board members played an important role. Our manager would come to the dormitory before

the morning prayer, wake us up for prayer, and lead the prayer. He would spend the whole day, night, and weekends with us. The same was true for our mentors. They helped us with our studies, contributing to our school's success. In short, the dormitory gave us a lot, and our manager, supervisors, and tradesmen uncles left a deep mark on us. I can even say there was a difference between students who stayed in the dormitory and those who didn't."

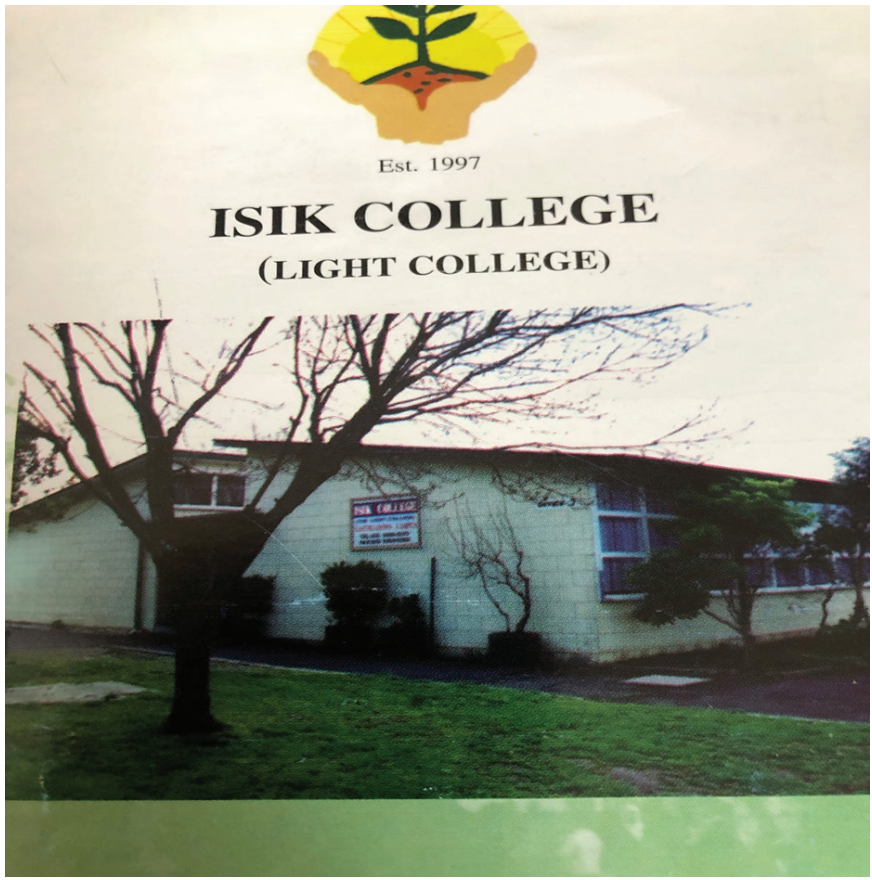
When I asked Turhan if he had any dreams while staying in the dormitory, he replied: "I often dreamed of swimming in the ocean. However, I didn't get tired while swimming. When I woke up from the dream, I felt a sense of peace." Turhan, who doesn't remember any bad memories related to the dormitory, said, "There were some difficulties, but I always remember good things. I don't have any bad memories." His mother told him, "We are now reaping the fruits of sending you to that dormitory."

Furkan enrolled in the dormitory in the second year of middle school. He faced difficulties in primary school because he didn't know the language when he came to Australia at the age of seven. Since there were almost no Turks around him, he always spoke English. Furkan, who faced more difficulties with the language than his classmates, said this caused him to lose his self-confidence. After enrolling in the dormitory, he regained his lost self-confidence because he had friends who spoke Turkish like him.

Furkan never forgets the board members and volunteers who came to the dormitory and volunteered. He still respects and embraces the board members and volunteers who volunteered at the dormitory when he sees them. For Furkan, performing the five daily prayers was easier at that time because everyone was doing it. The thing that saddened him the most while living in the dormitory was the drowning of his dear friend Halil Kurnaz. Once, he dreamed of seeing him on the upper floor of the dormitory. He saw that his feet were half a meter above the ground, and he was looking at him through coloured glass. Furkan was a bit scared by his appearance but felt he missed Halil Kurnaz very much when he woke up. Another thing Furkan never forgets is the volunteer women who came to the dormitory and cooked for them. According to Furkan, the quality and taste of the food increased significantly when they cooked. Furkan said, "We celebrated when they came."

According to Furkan, one of the problems at that time was that the manager and mentors from Türkiye wanted to implement the same practices as in the dormitories in Türkiye. There was a cultural difference between the

children growing up and being educated in Australia and the mentors from Türkiye, which sometimes caused problems. Manager Eren said, "If I had the knowledge I have today, I would have done things differently in the dormitory back then." An administrator of the dormitory mentioned that the impact of what was taught to the children in the dormitory diminished when they went to public schools. After experiencing this, we better understood the importance of establishing our own schools.



The Building and Emblem of Işık College (1997)

5.28. The First School Opened in Melbourne

The Selimiye Foundation began searching for suitable land and buildings to open a school. According to İbrahim Dellal, the foundation had very little money, at most a few thousand dollars. However, they hoped to receive more support for the school, as they had seen great community support when they opened a student dormitory. At a fundraising dinner for the dormitory project, around 60-70 people directly contributed or pledged over $90,000. Additionally, foundation members and the community had put in time and skills to prepare the dormitory building. Therefore, the Selimiye board members were very hopeful about successfully opening a school.

Through the Ministry of Education, they learned that a school building was for sale in Eastmeadows, where the largest number of Turkish and Muslim families lived in Victoria. At that time, the campus comprised two very old buildings, a few portable buildings, and vacant land. Ministry officials wanted to sell this school, which had not been used for about seven years, to builders to generate revenue for the ministry. The land was valued at approximately $2,000,000 at the time. However, Green Party MPs opposed selling it to builders and wanted it included in the green space. As a result, the school was not sold. The Ministry of Education officials decided to sell it as a school as the only option. In its current state, the price was only $400,000. The Selimiye Foundation's board decided to purchase the school. After inspecting the school grounds and evaluating the prices, they agreed to buy it for $400,000. After negotiations, $50,000 would be paid upfront, and the remaining amount would be paid a year later. Before signing the contract detailing the payment terms, İbrahim gave $20 from his pocket to show the foundation's strong desire to start the process. A few days later, the board members went to the Ministry of Education to sign the contract. Unfortunately, they were to be disappointed.

A bureaucrat approached them and stated that despite a verbal agreement, the Chairman of the Education Board refused to sell the school and that the correct procedures had not been followed. The building had to be advertised in the newspaper first and then sold at auction to the highest bidder. Interestingly, other schools had been sold without the necessary advertisement. İbrahim thought that someone from the Turkish community who disliked the Selimiye Foundation had complained to the Ministry of Education, as some sections of the community had previously done similar things against the foundation's activities.

The foundation's board members were determined to purchase the school. They waited at the Ministry of Education office for hours, stating they could not turn back after all the efforts to raise funds and convince the community to support the new school. Learning they could not complete the transaction at the last minute after agreeing on the deposit was entirely wrong. Moreover, some families had already applied to enrol their children.

The bureaucrats in the office tried to process their request and allow the purchase to be completed. However, after hours of waiting, the bureaucrats stated that the Chairman of the Education Board had given definite instructions not to sell the school to the Selimiye Foundation. İbrahim described that moment: "At that moment, all my hopes seemed to be dashed."

Tired of waiting for hours, the board members headed towards their parked cars. One of them asked, "Brother İbrahim, what will we do now?" İbrahim turned to the man and said, "Don't worry. This is not over yet." The members met with local government and opposition parties within a week regarding this issue. News came that the board members would attend a meeting at the Education Board's office.

The board members were hopeful and happy to have İbrahim with them. They knew İbrahim spoke English well and was respected in the state bureaucracy because he received the Silver Jubilee Medal. They were accompanied by Eren, who would serve as the school principal, and the foundation's accountant, Mehmet Aydınoğlu. İbrahim would speak on behalf of the group because his English was fluent.

A five-member committee from the Ministry of Education gathered to listen to the foundation's proposal. İbrahim presented the following arguments: "There are third-class citizens in our community who greatly need education. They cannot provide a suitable education for themselves or their children. The local government is aware of our educational activities. Federal Immigration Minister Nick Bulkos attended the opening of our dormitory. Moreover, we were promised this school, so we accepted about thirty early registrations within that week. I cannot tell the community that we cannot open the school. I cannot do that. This community trusts us. What will we tell them? Community members have pledged financial support for our school. Some even gave cash immediately. If we cannot purchase this school building, it will greatly blow our foundation's reputation and significantly affect us financially."

The committee members began asking questions. They requested written documents showing the amounts pledged by community members. The foundation's accountant provided the necessary documents. After reviewing the donation documents, the committee was convinced. The committee chairman stood up and said, "This school is now yours. You promised people, took their money, and gave them hope. Therefore, we have to give you this school." The foundation's accountant paid the full deposit by check, signed the agreement, and received the keys to the school.

Despite their relief at receiving the keys, the board members were still worried. The unnecessary delay wasted valuable time needed to prepare the school for the upcoming term. However, the board members were not considering postponing the opening date. Schools in the state were to open the following week. They received the keys on Friday.

İbrahim said, "We will open this school in three days. We invite you all to our opening," İbrahim said. The committee members were stunned. İbrahim could tell from their expressions that they did not believe him. The school urgently needed renovation, and completing this work would take at least three months, let alone three days. However, the board members, happy to have finally purchased a school building, were unafraid of the daunting task ahead.

The board members quickly gathered their families and friends and formed a team of more than 60 people, spending the next 78 hours working at the school. They painted the walls, replaced windows, bought new carpets and desks, cleaned the corridors, checked the plumbing and electricity. Due to the time constraints, they worked through the nights. The garden was landscaped.

The First Principal of the School, Eren, Remembers:

"During the process of acquiring the school building, İbrahim Dellal Abi, Mehmet Aydınoğlu, and Ali Abi made significant contributions. We went to collect the keys to the school with Mehmet Aydınoğlu and Ali Abi. It was a Friday, and public schools were set to open the following week. If we were late, we would have difficulty finding students and teachers, and those who had registered might withdraw. Over that weekend and the next few days, the abandoned building was ready for education in February 1997. Everyone, from young to old, pitched in, from painting the classrooms to hanging curtains and landscaping the outside. The sacrifices made there were truly historic.

During this process, education started, and children began attending schools. Board members, volunteers and some families were convinced to send their children to us. Most did, but since we only opened an elementary school, we couldn't take year four and above students or those from the dormitory. We only had elementary students. Finding both teachers and students in such a short time was indeed a remarkable service.

We started the year with 27 students. To find these students, we visited families one by one. Sometimes, fathers wanted to send their children, but mothers were reluctant. A year later, our student count rose to 150. One more thing I remember from those days is that some people questioned why we didn't open an Islamic school. They criticised us, saying, 'You are Muslims, why don't you open an Islamic school?' They didn't want the school to have a private school status. We told them there would be scripture classes and that we would provide religious knowledge differently. Over time, they saw the benefits of this and their objections decreased. Because, at that time, there were only a few Islamic schools in Melbourne. Thanks to the board members and Hizmet affiliates' volunteering activities we carried out before the school opened, people trusted us and believed we would succeed.

In those years, apart from Hizmet, there were almost no retreat programs or educational activities for young people in the Turkish community. Our efforts in this area set an example for the community. Over time, these activities began to bear fruit. Students started coming to our school from places as far as Dandenong, 30-40 km away. Students were transported to our school by buses."

5.29. Angels Helped

Three days later, on Monday, İbrahim went back to the Ministry of Education to get the final approval for the school's opening and to inform them that the school was ready. The relevant bureaucrat was astonished and said, 'This is impossible. Renovating that building would take at least three months. You can't finish it in three days. Did you repair the broken windows? There are more than 150 windows,' he said. İbrahim replied, 'Yes.'

'Did you fix the broken doors?' he asked. İbrahim again replied, 'Yes.'

'What about painting all the walls? Did you do that?' İbrahim smiled and said, 'That was done too.'

With each affirmative answer, the administrator's eyes grew wider. 'What about the carpets? Did you replace them?' he asked. İbrahim calmly said, 'Yes, we replaced them.'

'The exterior of the building, the garden? Did you clean them too?' 'Yes.'

'Don't tell me you also got the desks, chairs, and cabinets?' İbrahim laughed and said, 'We took care of those too.'

The administrator found it very hard to believe. 'This is impossible. How did you do it? Impossible,' he said. He expected the Selimiye Foundation first to advertise to find a contractor, make a contract, raise the necessary funds for the renovation, and get the decisions approved in board meetings, which would take at least three months.

Seeing İbrahim's confident demeanour, he asked, 'Your work speed is superhuman. Did anyone help you?' İbrahim proudly said, 'Yes, there were others.' The administrator asked, 'Who helped?' İbrahim replied, 'Angels.' The administrator was surprised. 'Are you serious?' he asked. İbrahim responded, 'Well, you said it yourself, that humans couldn't do it.'

The administrator said, 'You remind me of the Turks (Ottomans) in history.' İbrahim, curious, asked, 'I don't understand, what do you mean?' The administrator told him, 'Our elders used to say, "When the Ottomans said they would do something, they always did it." You said you would do one thing; you did two. Congratulations. I see you have even surpassed your ancestors.'

5.30. The Opening of Işık College

Members of the local government and opposition parties were invited to the opening. The school opened on February 17, 1997, with Principal Eren, Vice Principal Hülya, two teachers, and 27 students. The school was named Işık College. The founders aimed to raise a 'Golden Generation' dedicated to serving humanity.

İbrahim stated: 'For the first two years, even though I didn't even have a phone in my office, I did every job that the Selimiye Foundation or the school needed. In the first year, we struggled to pay the teachers' salaries. Principal Eren received less than half of his deserved salary. All the cleaning and construction work of the school was done voluntarily by board members and other members.'

5.31. Half Salary for School Workers

İbrahim said, "We didn't even have money to buy stationery. One of the most hardworking members of the board was Mehmet Aydınoğlu. I asked him to find us some money, and in response to our request, he found $1,000. Other

needs were also met with loans. Like the board members, there were dozens of heroes whose names I haven't mentioned here; people who dedicated their time, money, and prayers to make our dream come true and didn't want their names to be known. Each of them contributed greatly to the school. I can never forget them."

By the end of the first year, there were 64 students at the school. Only elementary school students (preparatory – 5th grade) were educated this first year. In the second year, there was a significant increase in the number of students. 286 children enrolled in the school, and 6th, 7th, and 8th grades were added. By the end of the third year, the number of students reached 460. Since the existing buildings were not sufficient, portable buildings were rented.

When I asked İbrahim the secret behind this high increase in the number of students, he smiled and said, "Everyone working at the school, from the principal to the janitor and volunteers, worked day and night. Some teachers worked not only during working hours but also voluntarily after hours and on weekends. This is the secret of the school's success. If you wanted to write down the names of these heroes, they would most likely say no and prefer to remain anonymous heroes." İbrahim was right. Some people, especially some women, said during this research that they only wanted Allah to know and didn't want to talk.[134]

5.32. Opening of the Dandenong Campus

Işık College began to attract the interest of Turks from various neighbourhoods around Melbourne. Starting in 1998, some Turkish parents living in the Dandenong district in the southeast of Melbourne began enrolling their children in Işık College, and during peak traffic hours, these students could travel 40-50 km to get to school. They spent two hours a day on the road. This was, of course, very difficult for the children. Parents in Dandenong frequently asked the Selimiye Foundation board members, "Why don't you open a campus there? There is a great need here too."

Despite some board members' objections due to financial sources, a committee was formed to search for land or a school building in Dandenong. For months, the board meetings discussed the opening of a new campus. There

134 For the details, see Salih Yucel, The Struggle of Ibrahim: Biography of an Australian Muslim, New Jersey: Tughrah Books, 2010.

were financial concerns as well as fears that there wouldn't be enough students and experienced Hizmet affiliated teachers. The objections were mainly based on the argument that the Selimiye Foundation did not have financial resources.

The committee learned that a ten-acre agricultural land was for sale in the Keysborough district of Dandenong; however, there were a few problems. First, the land was valued at half a million dollars, far above what the Selimiye Foundation planned to spend. Second, it was agricultural land and did not look very appealing. Additionally, the land was only designated for agricultural use, and the Selimiye Foundation would need to apply to the local council to change its use to a school. Getting permission would take time.

Cemal, the coordinator of the Selimiye Foundation, convinced the board to proceed with the purchase and assured them that the mentioned obstacles could be overcome. Cemal said, "I trusted the Turkish community in Dandenong. I believed they would support us." Realising that Cemal's words touched their hearts, İbrahim reminded the board members that their main goal was to provide quality education and moral values to Turkish children. Therefore, they aimed to ensure that Turkish children became good citizens of Australia. He informed the board members that he would handle legal matters, such as obtaining approvals from the local council.

With the help of the Dandenong Selimiye board members and the Turkish community in Dandenong, the foundation organised many fundraising events and charity bazaar auctions. People supporting the school raised money through garage sales and homemade food sales. The foundation applied for loans from banks and grants from the federal and state governments. After two years, the Turkish community raised the initial deposit amount to purchase the land, but fundraising activities continued to make the remaining payments.

The zoning change issue was still unresolved. İbrahim and another board member, Faruk, visited the council multiple times. They met with the relevant bureaucrats but couldn't solve the zoning issue. Later, they learned that some contractors wanted to change the area's zoning to build housing. After numerous meetings with the relevant parties, İbrahim and Faruk finally convinced the council to change the zoning. Faruk recalled, "We were lucky. The area around the school land was converted from agricultural to residential zones." This tripled the value of the land within three months.

After the zoning change was approved, the Turks in the area provided the necessary support. First, they focused all their efforts on fundraising. The

land was purchased, but no buildings, furniture, or anything was required for education. The board members decided not to wait for bank loans to build new buildings and chose to buy portable buildings. The board members and Hizmet affiliates' volunteers helped clean the buildings, landscape the surroundings, set up the necessary electrical and water installations, provide meals for the workers, and find families who wanted to enrol their children in the school. Most of this work was completed by volunteers.

Faruk said, "I was amazed by the collaborative efforts. Everyone worked so hard throughout the day that some came to help after long work hours, while others worked through the night and on weekends." Among these dedicated individuals İbrahim mentioned were the first principal of the Dandenong campus, Şaban, and at least twenty board members. Şaban participated in all volunteer work. This motivated others.

In January 2001, Işık College Dandenong campus opened with 30 students, two teachers, and a principal. Initially, elementary school-aged children attended Işık College. In 2008, the school had its first graduates, including students who had been there since the school opened. Of the 20 graduating students, 18 were accepted into universities in Victoria. At the first graduation ceremony, İbrahim couldn't hold back his tears in front of the families of the graduating students. The board's dream had come true. İbrahim thought, "I am the happiest person in the world." He glanced at the community leaders, parents, and friends attending the ceremony and saw the happiness in their eyes. "Everyone knew how difficult it was to open this school, but we achieved the difficulty and shared the joys and sorrows over the years. We are proud of these graduates," he said.

In the next chapter, you will read about how the seeds sown with sincerity, suffering, and tears brought success in Adelaide, Perth, and Brisbane in Australia.

CHAPTER SİX

SEEDS SPROUTING IN ADELAIDE, PERTH, AND BRISBANE

In this chapter, you will read about the activities, sacrifices, and divine blessings experienced by the Hizmet volunteers in the early years in Adelaide, Perth, and Brisbane. When listening to the Hizmet volunteers, they also appreciated the divine blessings. According to my research, when the number of Hizmet affiliates was small, they had a strong brotherhood, making them more sincere. Bediüzzaman said, "Just as there is the divine blessing (karamah) of sainthood, there is also the karamah of sincere intention. There can be many divine blessings of sincere solidarity among brothers in the brotherhood circle for Allah's sake. Even the collective personality of such a community can become like a perfect saint and be subject to divine assistance."[135]Fethullah Gulen Hoca Efendi said, "True brotherhood is the most acceptable spiritual prayer." The brotherhood among Hizmet volunteers has been a means of divine assistance from Allah.

While Hoca Efendi was at a camp in Melbourne, he asked Mus'ab, "Can you move to Canberra?" Mus'ab accepted. Later, Selim Hoca, who was attending the camp that day and was the imam of the largest mosque in Adelaide, shared various information and experiences about the Aborigines with Hoca Efendi in South Australia. He talked about the contributions of Afghan camel drivers to Australian society and how their generations were later assimilated. He also recounted very interesting incidents related to this topic. Selim Hoca not only lived in the city of Adelaide but also visited small and large settlements outside the city. During these visits, he encountered the grandchildren of Afghan camel drivers and found that they were completely assimilated. He also mentioned that Afghan camel drivers married the indigenous Aborigines and that their children were in great need of help. Sharing this information touched Hoca Efendi's heart, and he suggested to Mus'ab that moving to Adelaide was more essential than Canberra and asked if he would move there.

After Hoca Efendi returned to Türkiye, the first Hizmet affiliate coordinator who came to Australia stayed for a while and then said, "I can't do it," and returned. Later, there were some difficulties and frequency mismatches between the new coordinator and those in Australia. The Qur'an says, "...It may be that you dislike a thing which is good for you..." (Al-Baqarah: 216). This difficulty among the Hizmet volunteers turned into an opportunity. With Mus'ab and his family's migration to Adelaide, the foundation for educational activities was laid there. Hoca Efendi had also desired

135 Nursi, Barla Lahikası, https://kulliyat.risaleinurenstitusu.org/barla-lahikasi/yedinci-risale-olan-yedinci-mesele/15

Mus'ab migrated to Adelaide with his family. However, there were very few Turks there. But there were also Muslim academics and doctors from other nations, such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, and India. After Mus'ab went to Adelaide, he made various visits. Later, Halis also migrated from Melbourne to Adelaide. They first decided to open a dersane. At that time, a friend named Mustafa, who had divorced his wife in Melbourne, also came to Adelaide, and Mus'ab placed him in the study dersane. They started having spiritual study circles with three to five people on weekends at the dersane. Mus'ab also occasionally visited places near Adelaide in South Australia, such as Renmark, Murray Bridge, and Port Augusta, for visits and organised spiritual study circles. He also went to Mildura occasionally and had spiritual study circles there. Halis, who accompanied Mus'ab, said, "We used to go to Renmark, 250 km away, once a week for study circles. We also went to Marissa, near Adelaide, every week to have spiritual study circles with the Turks."

Once, Selim Hoca called Mus'ab and said, "Someone named Danny left a message on the mosque's phone from Port Augusta, saying he was researching Islam and wanted to come and talk to someone about it." Selim Hoca referred Danny to Mus'ab. Selim Hoca, Mus'ab, and Danny met after Friday prayers. Selim Hoca gave a short speech and said that since he was swamped, Mus'ab would help him. Mus'ab brought Danny home, and they had a meal together. Danny told his story from A to Z and explained how he became interested in Islam.

6.1. The Qur'an Inspires Peace

Danny said that he had initially been involved in mafia-like activities. At that time, he was involved in cigarette trading. He placed machines in central locations of residential areas. People would put money into these machines and get cigarettes. Once, while emptying the machine in Port Augusta at night, he was attacked by five or six Aborigines, beaten to death, and his money was taken. Danny stayed in the hospital for a long time. After being discharged, his traumas continued. He frequently visited a psychologist. The psychologist advised him to engage in different hobbies. Danny tried various hobbies. Then, a friend visited him and gave him a book, saying, "Read this book; it will relax you." Danny placed it on his bookshelf at home without looking at the book.

One night, unable to sleep, he got up to do something. At that moment, he noticed the book his friend had given him on the bookshelf. Danny took

the book and started reading it. It turned out to be an English translation of the Qur'an. While reading the English translation of the Qur'an, Danny felt relaxed. He noticed that his panic attacks decreased. This sparked his curiosity to learn about Islam. That day, he found the phone number of the Marion Mosque in Adelaide in the Yellow Pages and left a message there.

Many scholars and psychologists who have researched the verse of the Qur'an, "We send down in the Qur'an that which is a healing and a mercy to those who believe..." (Al-Isra: 82), have scientifically proven that reading and listening to the Qur'an brings peace. This is because the Qur'an addresses all a person's emotions.[136]

After this introduction, Danny became a Muslim, and Mus'ab taught him how to pray. They met almost every Friday. Danny also got involved in the costly pigeon business. He imported these pigeons from Europe. Their speciality was that they would return to their nests no matter where you released them. In the past, Hitler used pigeons for intelligence and various activities. Danny also had a son in his twenties. He played the guitar in nightclubs with an orchestra. His son also started meeting with his father and Mus'ab. Once, he said, "I want to pray like you," and he became a Muslim and started praying.

6.2. The First Institution in Adelaide

Mus'ab mentioned to Danny what he and his friends were doing. He noted that their goal was to support the youth, ensure they become good citizens, and protect them from bad habits. However, to do this better, they needed institutions, especially a dormitory, which would allow them to assist more effectively. Danny expressed his willingness to help with this. After returning to Port Augusta, he made various phone calls, reached the director in charge of government houses established for the poor, and secured an appointment. Mus'ab and Danny met with the director of the government houses for the poor. Mus'ab told Danny, "My English is not sufficient. You know our purpose. You explain it, and you will do it better."

Danny explained the project in their mind to the director and requested that one of the suitable government buildings be allocated to them so they could open a dormitory if possible. Mus'ab said, "The director was not very interested and told us, 'I don't have a building to allocate for this purpose.'

136 See Salih Yucel, Prayer and Healing in Islam, New Jersey, Tughrah Books, 2010.

He then said, 'I have other appointments,' and asked to be excused. As he stood up, I asked him, 'Do you have children of young age?' He said, 'Yes, I do. Why do you ask?' I replied, 'You are a good person. If we do not take care of these immigrant youths and help the troubled children, they will become bad people. What would you think if they influence your child and lead them astray one day?' Upon hearing this, the director asked us to sit down again and told me, 'You speak.' He then asked, 'Who are you, what do you do, and can you give me detailed information about this matter?'

I explained to him what we were doing and what we planned to do. I said, 'If we do not rehabilitate these youths, they will become a big problem. If we do not take care of these young people, they will end up on the streets and harm themselves and society. This will be a problem for both Australia and the existing system. They will try to influence your daughter and son to be like them. Would you think or accept such a thing? As a volunteer organisation, we want to help these kinds of youths and strive to prevent them from ending up on the streets. We were hoping that the organisation would help us with this project.'

Mus'ab continued, "The director said, 'Your project is interesting. I have nothing now, but I will investigate and get back to you.' Indeed, about 10 days later, he called me and said: In the 1880s, a wealthy businessman donated his large house in the Unley district, very close to the city centre, to the state government to take care of orphaned children. The churches operated it for a while but left it six months ago as it was no longer needed.

The director said, 'I want to give this to you, but I cannot give it to individuals according to law. Do you have a registered foundation?' Mus'ab replied, 'No, but we can establish one soon.' According to Mus'ab, a retired teacher of Pakistani origin, Mr. Nori was very helpful in establishing this foundation. Mr. Nori had taught and managed and was well-versed in the problems of the youth. He said, 'Let's find a name for the foundation that is inclusive of everyone,' and they decided on the name Multi-Cultural Youth Education Support Services and established the foundation. They informed the director about the situation. Of course, the management of this organisation was composed of people from different nationalities because the name was 'Multi-Cultural Youth Education Support Services,' so it had to be that way."

The director worked hard to rent this building in the Unley district for a small amount. He convinced the relevant ministries and even got an appointment with the state Minister of Education and his advisor. Mus'ab and the board members presented their project and what they wanted to do. As a result, they took over this historic building. Interestingly, the state government renovated the building after the church vacated it. It had 17 large rooms and a house at the back. The administrator came to Mus'ab's house to rent this historic building. According to the agreement, the foundation would pay the government $255 weekly. The state government would support the rest. At that time, perhaps the rent for each room was $150.

The First Hizmet Institution in Adelaide

6.3. A Mother's Advice: Son, Help the Muslims

During these meetings, Mus'ab tried to avoid revealing his Islamic identity as much as possible. However, the director asked, "Do you know someone is watching over you?" Mus'ab replied, "Yes, not just me, but everyone." It turned out that the director was referring to Allah. Then the director asked, "Do you know why I am helping you?" Mus'ab said, "No." He explained, "I was born and

raised in Port Pirie in the middle of the desert. My family had a delicatessen there. Afghan camel drivers would camp in the park in front of our shop while transporting goods. The Muslim camel drivers of those days were very good people; they would buy me chocolates and do good deeds. My mother told me, 'Son, these are very good people, and they are Muslims. If you ever reach a high position, help the Afghans or their children.' Today, I am fulfilling my mother's will. I understood that you are Muslims, so I tried to help you." Thus, the contract for the building was signed, and the dormitory activities began.

6.4. Meeting the Grandchild of Bejah Dervish

In South Australia, the grandchildren of Afghan camel drivers would gather once a year. Mus'ab and Selim Hoca went to meet them. Mus'ab met the grandchildren of Afghan camel drivers in South Australia. One of them was Bejah Dervish's grandchild. Mus'ab wanted to meet her. Mus'ab said, "She was 90 years old. I greeted her, but she didn't respond and spoke like an Australian. I said, 'We might be relatives. Your ancestors came to Australia, and my ancestors went from Afghanistan to Türkiye. Because I look similar, the woman suddenly changed. Then she said, 'La ilaha illallah Muhammadur Rasulullah,' came, hugged me, and cried. She took me aside and said, 'Look, we have suffered a lot. Because we were Muslims, they did many unwanted things to us in this country. That's why I was hesitant and cold towards you. But after your words, I suddenly felt warmth inside.' The elderly woman briefly told me about their difficulties, the discrimination they experienced despite today's conditions, and their hard life. She talked about her grandfather, Bejah Dervish, and how he was a good and moral person."

Mus'ab and Selim Hoca met the grandchildren of Aborigines who had married Afghan camel drivers. They established good relationships with them. However, the state authorities did not welcome these relationships because they were sensitive political issues. Therefore, Mus'ab and his friends could not maintain close relationships with them.

Afghan camel drivers played a crucial role in the exploration of Australia, the construction of railways, the laying of telegraph lines, and the discovery of many mineral deposits. According to some Australian historians, if it weren't for the Afghan camel drivers, the exploration of the interior of Australia might have been delayed by 50 years. Therefore, the Australian government remembers the Afghan camel drivers with gratitude. When Bejah Dervish died in 1957, a state funeral was held for him.

6.5. The Honest Mayor

The municipal building was right across from the dormitory in Adelaide. At that time, there were elections. Mus'ab and Hizmet affiliates supported a professor in the mayoral elections. They gave him a $500 check from the Multi Cultural Youth Education Support Services Foundation to be used in his election campaign. They also distributed hundreds of his brochures to homes with their friends. The professor was elected. Later, he visited Mus'ab and his friends. He returned the $500 check the foundation gave for the election campaign and said, "You are a volunteer organisation. I can imagine how hard you worked to collect this money. I didn't feel comfortable using this money for election purposes. Thank you very much. Please take this check back."

The mayor believed in the sincerity of Mus'ab and the board members, and Mus'ab would visit him from time to time. Once, Mus'ab told the mayor they needed a bus and asked if they had one the foundation could use for their volunteer social activities. The mayor said, "Yes, we have such a bus. Its market value is around $20,000, but we will sell it to you for $12,000. We will also pay the interest. You can pay this $12,000 in instalments over five years." Mus'ab said, "Thus, we bought the bus and started using it for youth activities. Later, a campus of Işık College opened in Mildura. They needed such a bus. We sold the bus to them for $25,000. We paid off our $12,000 debt. With the remaining $8,000, we bought a 15-seater minibus, which served our needs. We did this in consultation with the municipality. They were pleased and said, 'You made a smart trade.'"

Mus'ab said, "There were academics and doctors on the Multi Cultural Youth Education Support Services board. One was Professor Hamid Faruq, and the other was Professor Ahmed Eşfak, who specialised in cancer at Adelaide Hospital. As a foundation, we decided to open a private school. We made preliminary preparations for the school with these intellectuals on the board. For this, we needed prior permission from the state education ministry. We appeared before a 15-member committee headed by the general manager of private schools. We made a presentation that lasted about an hour. In this presentation, we explained the education system, mentoring program, and extracurricular activities we would undertake to ensure community support for the school we planned to open.

The committee's general manager asked the members, 'What caught your attention in this presentation?' He then said, 'For years, we have been meeting

with groups wanting to open private schools. After these meetings, we asked for various files or additional information from those who wanted to establish schools. A group wanting to open a private school came prepared with everything from A to Z and made a presentation to us. I am satisfied with what this committee has explained, and I am considering granting permission to this committee to open a private school.' The other members of the committee also accepted the school's proposal. Thus, the first permission was granted for the establishment of Burç College. However, they gave this permission on the condition that there be a school building. We didn't have the money to buy or build a school at that time. I asked the mayor if we could convert our dormitory into a school. He said they wanted to help but explained that the physical structure of the building was not suitable for a school. The rooms were small, no classrooms, the fire system was not set up accordingly, and many other things were unsuitable for a school."

Mus'ab, Halis, and the board members tried to establish the school but could not open it. Mus'ab returned to Melbourne, and the Hizmet affiliates who came later would establish it.

6.6. A Dream Seen in Adelaide

Latif, one of the Hizmet volunteers who came to Adelaide after Mus'ab left, recounts: "We made contact with Tatars, Turkmens from Iraq, and other Muslims in Adelaide. We visited them and hosted iftar dinners at our dormitory. At that time, there were not many Turks in Adelaide. We reached out to all the communities and Muslim groups without neglecting any. Gradually, a network formed. We had a small dormitory, which we used very actively. I remember that during one Ramadan, we hosted iftar for 165 people in that tiny place. Sometimes, we invited many people to iftar and prepared food accordingly, but when some didn't show up despite promising to come, it dampened our spirits. Nevertheless, we continued to invite them to iftar. When the school opened, those invited to Iftar contributed financially and spiritually significantly. So, our efforts were not in vain."

Previously, Mus'ab Bey and Hizmet affiliates, who had volunteered in Adelaide, had made some efforts to open a school. They had even obtained permission to establish the school. While further work was being done for the school, a friend of Hizmet had a dream in which he saw the school opening in Adelaide. According to Latif, the person who had the dream was energetic

and wanted to contribute to the community. Latif said, "There was also Uncle İsmail from Gaziantep living in Adeliade, and he had a large piece of land near the city centre. When we rented the building next to the mosque and applied for school permission, the authorities asked, 'What will you do if they evict you from this building tomorrow since it's rented?' Allah helped us, and Uncle İsmail wrote a letter saying, 'I am donating my land to the school.' With this letter, the Ministry of Education officials permitted us to open the school. We also worked day and night to find students for the school and enrolled over thirty students. We even registered children not yet of school age, telling the authorities, 'These will be our future students.' Thus, we were able to get permission from the authorities. When Uncle İsmail's children heard about the land donation, they objected, saying he couldn't give away the land. Ultimately, they didn't donate the land, but since we had already obtained permission, it didn't affect us much."

Halis and his wife made many sacrifices and worked voluntarily numerous times to open the school. He eagerly took on any task, whether driving the bus, cleaning, or attending to visitors. His wife also worked tirelessly in these services. They prepared meals for dozens of people for Iftar and often hosted guests in their home.

Halis described his state before a fundraising dinner: "On the morning of the fundraising day, I woke up at 5 am. I ran around all day inviting people to the fundraiser. On the other hand, we were preparing for the fundraiser, and our numbers were very low. We rented a place, invited people to offer food, and hold the fundraiser. I reached a point where I could no longer walk that day. I had sores between my legs from sweating, making walking very difficult. Just like a newly circumcised child struggles to walk on the first day, I was in the same state. But, thank Allah, about $35,000 was pledged at that fundraiser dinner, and most of it was collected. To succeed, you first need to give something to the community to receive something from them. In those early years, all the friends made great efforts." As Alvarlı Muhammed Lutfî Efendi said:

"At the door of Allah,

If you sacrifice your life,

If you serve as commanded,

Wouldn't Allah reward you?"

The Hizmet volunteers worked sincerely, and Allah granted them success. Formerly known as Burç College and now Pinnacle College, it serves today with three campuses and approximately 900 students in South Australia. You will read about how this college grew in the second volume of this book.

PERTH: THE CITY OF FREE PEOPLE

Perth's locals see themselves differently because the city was founded by free people, not by the convicts and their descendants who first came to Australia. Additionally, they feel somewhat superior due to having more underground resources than other states. Establishing a school here was not easy either.

Before writing about how the school was opened in Perth, I want to start with the story of a Turkish citizen who called himself "Communist Turhan. He had been a leader in a famous leftist organisation in Türkiye. He later immigrated to Australia. He was distant from religion and religious people but did more good deeds in helping others than the religious people. They nicknamed him "the one who runs to help even a flying bird." According to his own words, he drank alcohol but also attended Friday prayers and contributed to the construction of the Turkish mosque in Perth. On the other hand, Turhan's wife was a very devout lady. She prayed five times a day and supplicated for years so that her husband Turhan could also pray daily.

Before opening a school in Perth, the Hizmet volunteers visited a few people because there was no one from Hizmet there yet. During this visit, they also visited Turhan, known for helping everyone. Turhan had negative thoughts about Hizmet. He bluntly told them, "You are against Atatürk, and you are too strict in religion. I will work against you to prevent you from opening a school here or anywhere else." However, due to a lack of financial resources and no one from Hizmet being there, they parked the plans to open a school in Perth.

Later, Turhan's wife wanted to go on a pilgrimage. Her husband said, "Okay." However, to go on the pilgrimage, she needed to be accompanied by her husband, brother, or sons; otherwise, the Saudi Arabian Embassy would not issue a visa. When his wife insisted, Turhan reluctantly said, "Let me

accompany you on pilgrimage and see how it goes." According to his own words, he even drank alcohol before going to the airport for the pilgrimage. A friend who informed him about the pilgrimage said, "When you see the Kaaba, whatever prayer you make, Allah will accept it."

While Turhan's plane circled in the skies of Jeddah due to heavy air traffic, the pilot announced, "We will approach Mecca and pass by the Kaaba. First, those on the plane's left side can see the Kaaba from the window, and then those on the right can see it when we turn." As they approached the Kaaba, the pilot announced, "Those on the left side can look out the window and see the Kaaba from a distance." Turhan, excited, got up a bit and tried to see the Kaaba from the window and saw it. He prayed silently, "Allah, save me from my non-practice state of Islam." He said it felt like something flowed from his head to his feet, and he felt great peace. When he reached Medina and approached the Prophet's tomb, he saw many people crying. When he asked someone why they were crying, they said, "This is the blessed tomb of the Prophet behind these silver bars." Upon hearing this, Turhan also started crying for about half an hour. That day, he became a completely different person.

After completing his pilgrimage, he quit drinking alcohol and started praying five times a day. He regretted what he had said to the Hizmet volunteers who came to establish a school in Perth while he was at the Kaaba. He saw a few people in a corner at the Kaaba holding Risale-i Nur books, which were Said Nursi's works, and reading them. Turhan approached them and introduced himself. They were Hizmet volunteers who had come for the pilgrimage. Turhan asked for a phone number to contact the Hizmet affiliate in charge in Australia. They gave him İbrahim Dellal's phone number from Melbourne. After returning from the pilgrimage, he called İbrahim Dellal and asked Hizmet affiliates to come to Perth and establish a school. İbrahim Dellal said, "We were discussing this with the board. Currently, there is no one there, but an affiliate from Indonesia will come soon, and hopefully, he will start the schoolwork." Turhan was pleased about this and helped the Hizmet volunteers who came later to open the school.

The first person to migrate to Perth was Hadi, who worked diligently, and a piece of land was purchased to establish a school. However, building a school on that land was impossible for various reasons. After Latif went to Perth, he tried to develop sincere relationships with everyone from Türkiye, regardless of whether they were Alevi, Sunni, Kurdish, or Turkish. Latif said,

"We tried to do things together with everyone, regardless of whether they were Kurdish, Turkish, Sunni, Shia, or secular, to unite the community and promote brotherhood." Of course, breaking the preconceived notions was not easy. However, Latif and his friends continued their efforts without losing hope. Due to a nasty incident involving money and taxes at an Islamic school, state authorities became sceptical about Muslims opening schools. An Islamic school had shown some students as enrolled without registering them and receiving money from the state.

Hakan, who moved to Perth, recalls: "In Australia, the Hizmet educational system was gradually being established. First, Hadi Hoca came to Perth. A piece of land was purchased there, but a school could not be opened for various reasons. However, efforts to open a school continued. They said they would open a school there and asked me to design a logo for the school. At that time, there were very few people in Perth, just a few friends. Suat and his family, as well as a few families from the mosque congregation, supported us. We obtained temporary permission to open a school in the Coolbellup district, in a very old and unused state school. They had only found a place in that district. There were classrooms but no chairs or desks. Inspectors would come to inspect and decide whether it could be a school. There were no students. Indeed, the inspectors came, saw nothing, and said, 'We will come back later.' We made an effort and managed to find 33 students from kindergarten to seventh grade."

A few people worked day and night to open the school in that old building. They cleaned it, repaired the broken parts, and acquired the necessary desks, chairs, and other essential items for education. Thus, Damla College began its education in an old building in 2006.

Damla College and Its First Students

6.7. The Cleaner Principal

Hakan recalls: "I was only staff preparing the school's curriculum. There was no bus or transportation service for the students to come to school. We started this school under very challenging conditions. Education began, but there was a significant staff shortage, and we didn't have an accountant. We cleaned the school by ourselves. We opened two classes: one for grades one to three, another for grades four to six, and a separate class for seventh graders. When teaching, you had to explain the lesson separately to first, second, and third graders, as it was not possible to teach the same lesson to the entire group at once. This is how the school project started in that old building with many difficulties. I learned from someone else how to handle the accounting tasks because salaries had to be paid through that system. The first year was quite busy and demanding."

Listening to Hakan reminded me of a hadith about leadership. When the Prophet was serving water to his companions, a Bedouin entered and shouted, "Who is the leader of these people?" The Prophet expressed a powerful

principle of Islamic leadership and public administration in three words: "Seyyidu'l qawm khadimuhum" - "The leader of a people is the one who serves them."[137] Hakan, as a principal, also worked like a janitor. This was already a core principle of the Hizmet Movement. The administrative Hizmet affiliates often do whatever needs to be done regardless of their positions.

6.8. The Driver Principal

Hakan continues, "Despite the intensity, we held the school's opening ceremony, and a member of parliament attended. I told the MP that we needed a school building. Later, we moved the school to another location, Ferndale. In the second year, the number of students increased from three classes to five. We had a Cypriot teacher who taught physical education. He loved our school and made significant contributions. He even formed a sports team at the school. Our school started participating in tournaments. This helped establish discipline in the school because our PE teacher would tell the students, 'Kids, if you don't study your other subjects, you won't have a place in training.' This motivated the students to study their other subjects well. On weekends, I would drive the bus as the principal when taking the kids to tournaments. Again, I would drive when we went on camps or trips because there was no driver."

When we moved the school to another location. A very sincere Greek mayor in that area liked us very much. Latif said, "The mayor invited us to his home for dinner. He liked the Turks." Hakan added, "He even gave us his card and asked his accountant to help us voluntarily after 5 PM. As far as I remember, his accountant helped us for about 10-15 weeks after 5 PM. We needed a school budget plan because we couldn't buy or rent a new school without it. Since they knew the work well, they helped us prepare a business portfolio, explaining how it should be done. The business portfolio was so well-prepared that they said, 'With this, you can apply anywhere and get what you want.' The mayor and his accountant had prepared everything related to the school's needs. I would go to the municipality as if I were one of them, and they welcomed and helped me very well. Of course, I learned a lot while preparing this portfolio. It clearly explained what we would do, how we would do it, what steps we would take in the coming years, where we would go, our goals, and our purpose.

137 Daylami Masnad, II, 324, Hindi, Kanz'ul-Ummal, v. 6, p. 710 in Fethullah Gülen, Messenger of God: Muhammad (New Jersey: The Light, 2005), 270.

Our school was in an area with a very high crime rate. A Bangladeshi volunteer stayed as a volunteer security guard at night. We didn't charge him rent and told him to call us if anything happened.

6.9. Attempt to Burn the School

The school was opened in an area with a high crime rate. Several times, they broke the school's windows. Hakan, Latif, and other Hizmet affiliates took turns keeping watch at the school at night. Once, two young men attacked the school, set the bus on fire, and burned all the children's sports uniforms. The next day, the mayor visited the school. Later, a local radio conducted interviews and reported the incident at the school as a terrorist act. Following these reports in the media, the state premier visited the school. They told us, "We will cover all the costs of the burned items." They offered to help with this. The school administration also asked the state premier for a school building.

Hakan said, "In the meantime, I went to the local MP and reiterated our request for a school building. He told me that asking for a school might not get you one; there is a process, a way, and a method. He advised us to submit our requests and demands under that process. At that time, there was a condition that if you had fewer than 150 students in some areas, you couldn't open a school there. I had been entirely exhausted for two years and wanted to go abroad to another country and work overseas.

Let me tell you something interesting about the current school. Latif Hoca and I were going to look at two schools, but we didn't know which ones. We randomly went to the current school in the Ferndale district. We thought it might be the school. When we entered the school building, someone greeted us. It turned out to be the principal of that school. He asked us, 'What are you looking for?' We said we came to buy a school building. He replied, 'This school is not for sale. You cannot legally enter here because you don't have permission.' Ironically, Hizmet affiliates later bought that school." Currently, this school is called Fountain College, with over 500 students.

6.10. The Altruism of Women

Turhan bought a suitable car for selling food at festival-type programs and donated it to the women to raise money for the school. The Hizmet affiliated women played a very active role in establishing the school. They would go to various festivals, especially on weekends, sell gözleme and other food, and

donate the money they earned to the school. Some days, they earned $3,000, sometimes even $4,000. For two years, the women went to a festival or a program every weekend, selling gözleme and other items. They voluntarily did this work for two years, taking great spiritual pleasure and doing it with love. While everyone else in Australia was resting at home or having picnics on weekends, they spent their weekends this way. The women were the unsung heroes in establishing this school in Perth. Latif said, "As soon as the school work started in Perth, we saw great altruism from everyone, men and women alike. Some even took out loans to donate to the school's establishment."

BRISBANE

6.11. The First Migrant: Mehmet Korkmaz

Mehmet Korkmaz was the first to have the honour of migrating to Australia as a board member or mutevelli of the Selimiye Foundation. According to his friends, the late Mehmet Korkmaz donated a house in Türkiye to the Hizmet Movement. Allah rewarded him many times over. Years ago, he migrated to Brisbane to volunteer for Hizmet. The Director of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of Türkiye once said he wouldn't send an imam to another neighbourhood, even though they were salaried. In the 90s, there were many theology graduates in Melbourne from another group but none in Sydney. When asked why they didn't send a theologian to Sydney, their leader said, "The rents are very high there. No one wants to go." The altruism of Mehmet Korkmaz, who had no religious educational background but a heart full of faith, is unforgettable.

Mehmet Korkmaz migrated without any expectations and, along with his wife, worked tirelessly in the path of Allah until he fell ill. On his last night, despite his illness, he prayed for a long time after the night prayer and his wife recited the Qur'an to him. Interestingly, when she recited the last verses of Surah Al-Qadr, "The angels and the Spirit descend therein by permission of their Lord for every matter. Peace it is until the emergence of dawn," he told her to stop. He passed away before the morning prayer. In the 2000s, he donated his apartment in Mersin to the Hizmet there. He remained generous until his last breath.

6.12. Bediüzzaman's Advice to Those Going to Brisbane!

Mehmet Korkmaz, Hizmet affiliates, and his wife voluntarily migrated from Melbourne to Brisbane. They took nothing with them. However, when they decided to move there, Mehmet's wife had a dream of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi. Bediüzzaman first appeared young; then, as he approached, he took on his oldest form. Bediüzzaman advised her, "My daughter, you are going to Brisbane. Will you do these things there?" She replied, "Of course, sir, I will gladly do them." Upon waking from this dream, she sat on her bed and cried joyfully. Nothing could change her spiritual feelings at that moment. Inspired by this dream, they gladly moved to Brisbane and, with Allah's permission, became a means of many beneficial for planting the seeds of Hizmet there. At that time, the city was inhabited mainly by people who had distanced themselves from religion and the Turks. Mehmet and his wife invited everyone to their home without any discrimination. Although they had no furniture at home, the guests were generally pleased.

A Turkish person invited them to his döner shop for a meal with his family. When they arrived, a woman in her 60s asked, "Are you Turkish?" When he said yes, the elderly woman asked, "Can you teach me how to pray?" He replied, "Of course." However, sitting there, the woman's daughter scolded her, saying, "We have nothing to do with people like you," and did not bring her mother to learn how to pray. Since Mehmet's wife didn't have a car, she couldn't go to teach her.

A man came in while Mehmet and his wife sat in a döner shop. The shop owner told the woman, "This man likes people like you." Mehmet got up and hugged him. It turned out they had met before. The man invited them to his home with his family, and they went. When they arrived, the man told Mehmet, "I will show you a clergy. This man doesn't call anyone a disbeliever." He then played a video cassette. Mehmet saw that it was a cassette of Fethullah Gülen Hoca Efendi. It turned out that the man was an Alawi who listened to and loved Hoca Efendi's sermons. Mehmet, "We have many of these cassettes," and later started giving him Hoca Efendi's video cassettes.

They later met another family who would come to their home every Friday. The wife wanted her husband to attend Friday prayers. One day, she asked Mehmet, "Can you invite my husband too so he can come to Friday prayers?" Mehmet took him to the mosque but realised he did not know religion. He said, "Let's make ablution together and pray together." They made

ablution and performed the Friday prayer together. The woman said, "My husband and children don't know how to have ablution or pray." At that time, they had a video cassette on how to pray. He might not have watched it if they had given it directly to her husband. They wrote Hoca Efendi's name on it. The woman took the cassette home and placed it on the table in the living room. Her husband put the cassette in the video player to watch it, and the woman started praying in the next room, fearing her husband might get angry because of the cassette. When her husband started watching the cassette, he called her, but she couldn't respond because she was praying. He went to her room and saw her praying. After the prayer, she went to the living room. Her husband asked, "Where did you get this cassette? Don't give it back so we can all learn how to pray from it." Thus, the cassette helped him and their children learn to pray.

6.13. The World Is Round Anyway

Mehmet's wife recounts: "In Brisbane, we visited an elderly man with my husband. When it was time for prayer, we asked for the direction of the qibla. The man angrily said, 'I am amazed at these Muslims. The world is round, so whichever way you turn, it will be the qibla.' In response, I turned my back to him and sat that way. The man and his wife were surprised. I told them, 'The world is round anyway, so I am facing you this way.' This was a good lesson for them."

She continues: "An elderly man we knew on the Gold Coast had a brother who passed away. The poor man didn't know what to do. He didn't know how to make ablution, pray, or perform the funeral prayer. He called my husband. My husband went and helped him. He taught him how to make ablution and perform the funeral prayer. Together, they conducted the funeral."

6.14. How Envy is Destructive

While searching for a school plot, they found one very close to a Turkish Sufi community's mosque. They sat with the landowner and bargained and agreed on a price. They even gave a $1,000 deposit. However, when the Sufi community, which had a centre nearby, heard about it, they went to the landowner and said, "We will give you more than they offered; don't sell the land to them; sell it to us." The landowner then decided not to sell the land to us and returned our $1,000. But that community never bought the land from him either. The

landowner regretted it greatly and came back to us. We consulted Hoca Efendi about it. Hoca Efendi said, "It would not be appropriate to buy land close to the mosque of the Sufi Order." Therefore, they decided not to buy that land. She witnessed how jealousy can be an obstacle and destructive for good deeds.

6.15. A Surprise Help

Mehmet's wife continues, "When we went to Brisbane, we had no house. We didn't have one in Melbourne either. We didn't have the money to buy a house. We tried to connect with every Turk we could find there in Brisbane. My husband and I cleaned a döner shop in the evenings. The owner of the döner shop and another Turk who liked us wanted to buy us a house. They invited my husband and me to their shop, offered us a meal, and then a woman came with some papers. The two döner shop owners said, "Sign these papers." We were surprised. We knew these people were good and wouldn't make us sign anything wrong, but we were still worried. In the end, when they insisted, we signed. After signing, the two döner shop owners said, "Congratulations on your new home." We were astonished because we had no intention of buying a house and had no money. They had agreed to buy us a house, pay the initial deposit, and let us pay the rest. They had arranged to buy the woman's house for us. They paid a $4,000 deposit for us and arranged the rest with the bank, and we paid it off gradually. Later, when leaving Brisbane, we sold the house, paid off the remaining debt, and donated a significant portion of the proceeds to the newly established school."

She recalls, "The house was small. Since we had visitors, we wanted to make an addition. We found a Bosnian architect and told him we would establish a school in Brisbane. The architect looked at us and didn't believe what we said. Two weeks later, there were elections. A woman running for Mayor came to our door and asked for our vote. We said, "We will vote for you, but we want to build a school here. If you are elected, we hope you will help us." The mayoral candidate looked at us strangely, as if she did not believe what we said but agreed. About a year later, we found a plot for the school. I called the mayor and requested an appointment, explaining that we had found a plot for the school and wanted to discuss it. When we arrived at the appointed time, the mayor had gathered the relevant architects and administrators. She said, 'When you first told me you would open a school, I didn't believe you. But I see now that I was wrong.'

When we told her the location of the plot, the mayor said, 'That place won't work; a road will pass through there.' We didn't know this, so the mayor saved us from buying the wrong plot. If we hadn't made an appointment and asked, we might have purchased that plot and lost money, and the school wouldn't have been built.

In 2004, my husband went to Türkiye. That year, a Hizmet affiliate in Brisbane found a plot close to the Sufi community mosque that had previously prevented us from buying land. I reminded them that Hoca Efendi had said, 'Do not buy land close to them.' However, they didn't listen and even paid a $16,000 deposit. They held a picnic on the plot, inviting people and saying they would open a school. However, the attendees didn't eat the food prepared by other Muslims according to their taste. That night, after 10 PM, the friend in charge came to our door, and my husband grabbed him by the collar, saying, 'How could you do this? You were reminded that Hoca Efendi said not to buy land close to them. How could you do this?' My husband was crying as he said this. As a result, we lost $16,000. Of course, the landowner didn't return our deposit because we had changed our minds."

6.16. The Migration of Zübeyir and Hümeyra

In 2006, at the request of the late Mehmet Ali Şengül Hoca and the Board members of the Feza Foundation in Sydney asked Zübeyir and his wife Hümeyra to move to Brisbane to start educational activities in the short term and open a school in the long term. Zübeyir asked the late Mehmet Ali Şengül, "Should I go soon or later?" He replied, "It would be good if you move soon. Your wife can join you later." Following his request, Zübeyir and Hümeyra loaded their belongings into a truck and went to Brisbane. Hümeyra was pregnant and expecting a baby in 2-3 weeks. They stayed at the late Mehmet Korkmaz's house. Since they had children, they had difficulty finding a rental home. Later, they rented a house next to a Buddhist temple. At that time, there were not many Turks in Brisbane. Those who were there lived in different neighbourhoods and far from each other.

Zübeyir recalls: "At that time, the Turks in Brisbane were generally non-practising Turkish Muslims and lived very scattered, never coming together. There was Yavuz to help and a few families in Bundaberg, about 400 kilometres away, committed to their national and spiritual values. But we didn't sit idle; we slowly started visiting the Turks we could find. The general idea among

the Turks was that the community couldn't come together. Even the honorary consul of Türkiye said, 'We can only get 3-4 people together occasionally to play bridge.' The common belief was that people who had broken away from other cities in Australia had come to this state and couldn't come together or work together. When I met with the honorary consul, he said, 'I see you are very excited. I've been here for 20 years, and nothing will come from this community.' I told him, 'We want to bring the community together, do some educational activities, and in the long term, establish a school here,' but he didn't believe it.

When the World Theatre Group from Türkiye came to Australia to perform programs, Zübeyir and his wife invited them to Brisbane. They organised a picnic for families in a university park. Poems were recited. During the program, Hümeyra was taken to the hospital for childbirth.

Zübeyir said, "I left the program and went to the hospital. But I was always in contact with my friends by phone. I followed the program from the hospital. After the baby was born, I called my friends and asked if I could come. They said, 'There's no need for you to come. The program is going well, and we are handling everything.' During birth, the baby's cord was wrapped around its neck. It was a perilous situation. But with Allah's grace and the help of the doctors, the problem was resolved, and the baby was born healthy. As far as I remember, 30-40 people attended that program. It was small but promising because they said that never before had so many Turks come together in Brisbane."

6.17. Tears of Joy

Zübeyir recounts: "As October 29th, Republic Day, was approaching, we decided to do a program to celebrate. We considered inviting people to a park under the Anzac Bridge in the city centre, offering döner, and celebrating Republic Day. We invited people we knew to participate in the celebration. We had plenty of Turkish flags with us, which we gave the children. We also had a speaker and CDs for teaching Turkish, which I distributed to the children. People from the Turkish community gathered, and some even cried joyfully during the gathering. This program inspired us, making us realise that we needed to integrate into the community and organise activities gradually. The community wanted to see actions rather than talk. This also gave us the feeling

that if we wanted, we could come together as the Turkish community here and achieve something.

This program gradually triggered other programs. People had been here for years and accepted that coming together was possible. These gatherings became a source of hope and light for them. Later, we started offering Turkish language courses for children in a rented house. Although only 3-5 students attended initially, opening doors to more community activities. We began offering Turkish language courses in the garage of our house next to the Buddhist temple and a rented student house in the complex. Later, we rented two rooms in a closed factory and started giving Turkish lessons there. Parents brought their children to learn Turkish and waited there. While the children were learning Turkish inside, we interacted with the parents outside. Most visitors were culturally Muslims with little connection to religion, but they wanted their children to learn Turkish and their culture. Through these activities, we gradually integrated with the Turkish community there. We visited them, had tea together, and listened to them." Such programs gradually inspired some Turkish community members to open a school in the long term.

6.18. The Nameless Six-Month-Old Baby

Zübeyir became emotional as he recounted the early months in Brisbane and continued: "When relatives of the Turkish community in Brisbane passed away, we helped with their funerals. We also helped them name their children. Generally, people had a cultural sense of Islam. We tried to help them live according to the requirements of cultural Islam. Gradually, we started coming together on some holy nights, such as Miraj and Layla Qadir, Baraa and observing them. Once, a baby was born, and the family hadn't named him for six months. They called me, and I went, recited the adhan in the baby's ear, and named the baby. It happened like this: The parents invited their mother from Türkiye when the baby was born. The woman wanted to practise her religion but had very little religious knowledge. Her children had no connection to religion. Encouraged by her, they found and called me, and I named the baby. When I went to their home, I wanted to pray, but no one knew the direction of the qibla. Even the mother, who came from Türkiye, didn't know. But she was culturally attached to Islam. She said, 'We don't know much about religion and what to do.' I told her, 'Don't worry, we are here and will help you.'

A Turk had also come from Izmir and settled in Brisbane. His father passed away. I offered my condolences and suggested, 'If you want, we can organise a memorial program for your father, and people can come and offer their condolences.' We rented a place behind the Turkish language course we had opened, and he invited his acquaintances to the program for his late father. The Turk from Izmir was well-liked in Brisbane, so many Turks attended the program. Most of the attendees wore black sunglasses and had no connection to religion. He gave a short speech, saying, 'This was the speech of my life.' Then, tea and food were served. His father's death became a means for people to come together. We organised such programs to bring Turkish people together."

6.19. Circumambulating the School Plot

Zübeyir shared the following about finding a plot for the school before it was established: "We gradually started looking for a school plot. Since many areas in Brisbane are flood zones, finding a suitable plot was difficult. We even paid a Turkish real estate agent $1,200 and asked him to work hard for 1-2 weeks, scan all the plots in the city, and find us a suitable one. He found us a plot worth $1,600,000. This amount was huge for the Turkish community in Brisbane at that time. No one believed that this money could be found. They wanted a down payment of $472,000. The plot was suitable for a school. We received financial support from the Hizmet affiliates in Melbourne and Sydney. Additionally, my wife had an apartment inherited from her father in Türkiye, which we sold, and we used the money to pay the down payment for the school plot. The generosity of Hizmet affiliates in Brisbane and the support from friends in Sydney and Melbourne became a source of hope and motivation for us."

Hümeyra, while recounting the day they found the school plot, seemed to relive that day. She said: "One early morning, my husband said, 'Hümeyra, we found a plot,' and my baby was sleeping. We wrapped the baby in a blanket and went to the plot. We walked around the plot with the child wrapped in a blanket as if we were circumambulating it. I told my husband, 'This is near the city, a central location, and there isn't much traffic. Many people will enrol their children if this plot becomes a school. I was so amazed that I started walking around with the baby in my arms, reciting Salawat (blessings upon the Prophet), hoping this plot would be ours. Our biggest concern was finding a school plot. Many plots had been found, but they were unsuitable for a school

for various reasons. Some were unsuitable for traffic, and some didn't have permission to build a school. Ultimately, the plot I walked around with my baby in my arms, reciting salawat, became the one we bought to build the school."

Wisdom College's First Portable Building (2008)

6.20. The Opening of the School and Obstacles

After purchasing the school plot, some rumours started circulating in the Turkish community. Some said that America was helping them, while others spread different rumours. Zübeyir made a list of all the Turks he knew living in Brisbane and visited them individually. Some gave $50, some $100, and some even more. Zübeyir visited everyone, regardless of whether they were right-wing or left-wing, religious or non-practised Muslims. He explained the school project and asked for their help.

Zübeyir recalls: "In the shopping centre in our neighbourhood, there was a communist Turk from Konya. I went to him, showed him from whom we had collected money, and then asked, 'We need help. Can you help us? I even asked if he could lend us money.' He said, 'I can't help, but I have a friend who owns thirteen gas stations; maybe he can help.' He then called his friend and tried to convince him. The friend thought that if he lent money, it wouldn't be repaid. He tried to convince him, but in the end, we couldn't get any money from either of them that day. However, they learned we weren't getting money

from America; we were collecting it from the local Turkish community or borrowing it."

6.21. Hümeyra's Altruism

A lot of money was needed to purchase the school plot. Hümeyra sold her apartment in Türkiye, which she had inherited from her father, and donated the money to the school. Yavuz, his father-in-law, and close relatives also made significant financial contributions. They worked like labourers, repairing and painting old portable buildings and landscaping the school grounds. Their sacrifices influenced other Turks in the area, who also made financial contributions.

6.22. An Interesting Coincidence and Pine Trees from Gallipoli

Zübeyir said: "Interestingly, we bought the plot on the eighth day of the eighth month in 2008. I don't think this is a coincidence. An interesting-looking house on the plot was built in 1984 without a single nail. Because of its nail-less construction and unique appearance, it won the Australian Architecture Award in 1984. One day, while I was in this house on the school plot, someone came and said good morning. He then said, 'The building looks beautiful.' When I asked who he was, he replied, 'I am one of the architects who built this house.' He was Swiss and had brought three young builders with him. They built the house by interlocking the wood without using nails. It was quite interesting. Another interesting fact is that this builder brought the pine trees from Gallipoli to the plot. So, those trees were not native to Australia."

Zübeyir continues: "The plot needed to be cleared, and some trees had to be cut down, which required excavation work. We didn't know how to do this, who would do it, or who would help us at that time. We also didn't have any money. There was a Naqshbandi Mosque nearby. I would occasionally go there, call the adhan, and give the iqama. They had Saturday programs, and I attended those, so we had a good relationship. Sometimes, they held fundraising dinners for the mosque, and I would attend and contribute. I met the Jimmy brothers, who had converted to Islam, at this mosque. They had a famous CD at that time and also did excavation work. When I told them about our plot and our plan to open a school, they said, 'We will help you. You follow the procedure and place an ad, and we will come and do the work.' They were going to do it at a low cost. There were big trees on the school plot. We had

applied to the municipality to cut these trees and were waiting for permission. One of Jimy's brothers told me, 'Come early in the morning, show me what needs to be done and which trees need to be removed, and I will take care of it.' He was a 74-year-old Australian with a long beard. He came early in the morning with his grader and started removing the trees. He finished by eight o'clock and told me, 'I'm leaving. If anyone comes, say that Jimmy's men did this.'

From his statement, I understood that people from the municipality would come. At that time, the neighbours also lined up along the school boundary. Some had complained to the city, and officials came. The neighbours were curious, asking, 'We've been here for years; what's happening on this plot?' and 'How did you cut these trees?' We told the officials, 'We hired two people, they came and removed the trees, and we don't know the details beyond that.' The municipality officials said, 'We will call you to the municipality.' The municipality fined us $2,000 and required us to plant eight trees. Thus, the matter was resolved."

6.23. Obstacles to Good Deeds

Bediüzzaman said, "O my brothers! Important and great good deeds have many harmful obstacles. The devils will struggle significantly with the servants of the Qur'an and faith. Against these obstacles and devils, it is necessary to rely on the strength of sincerity. Avoid the causes that break sincerity as you would avoid snakes and scorpions."[138] Some people would not stop trying to prevent the opening of this school.

Zübeyir later heard that some people had taken action to prevent the school from opening. He recounts: "At that time, over 80 signatures were collected in the neighbourhood and sent to the municipality to prevent the school from opening. In response to this reaction, the municipality said, 'We cannot grant permission for a school there because the public does not consent.' Through our solicitor, we found a barrister who handled these matters and took the complaints from the municipality to the lawyer. The barrister was smart and examined each complaint individually, saying, 'In fact, only five people complained. The others used copies of those five people's complaints.' When he reported this to the municipality, they permitted us to establish the

138 Nursi, Lemalar, Istanbul: Şahdamar Yayınları,2007,s 200.

school, even without the consent of those five people. The lawyer reported that the other 80 people were not against such a thing. These five people had gone around the neighbourhood, giving copies of their complaints to others, who then wrote the same thing in their petitions. Thanks to this experienced barrister, we overcame this difficulty and received permission to open the school. Later, through the barrister, we had meetings with the municipality. The municipality said they would grant permission on the condition that a traffic light be installed there. We did this and obtained permission to establish the school."

They were going to open the school, but they had no money. Buildings needed to be set up for the school to open. The board members at that time decided to initially purchase and place two or three portable prefabricated classrooms on the plot. This would be both cheap and quick, allowing the school to open. Zübeyir and some board members visited an Islamic school in the area. They said they were building new buildings and had three portable classrooms, which they sold to them cheaply. These portable classrooms were broken and dilapidated, but they had no choice but to place them on the plot. Then Zübeyir, board members, and Turkish volunteers repaired and painted these portable classrooms, making them look new. Even the principal of the Islamic school was surprised when he saw these classrooms at the school's opening because they had been completely transformed. The help of Yavuz's father-in-law and his family, who were very supportive, was unforgettable.

Another Hizmet affiliate recently moved from Sydney to Brisbane poured the concrete at a very low cost. Otherwise, others were asking for a lot of money they didn't have. This affiliate had previously contributed significantly to establishing Şule College in Sydney. Zübeyir worked as a labourer in repairing, painting the buildings, and pouring the concrete. His laborious work left a significant impact on board members and volunteers. They also worked diligently until the school repairs were completed and education was commenced.

6.24. The Little Girl's Tears

Hümeyra was very busy with Hizmet's educational and religious activities. Sometimes, she left her six-year-old daughter with Mehmet's wife. She took such close care of her that she became like an aunt to her. The little girl thought she was her real aunt because Mehmet's wife cared for her so much. Once,

Hümeyra went to Türkiye with her little daughter. She introduced her to her grandfather, aunts, uncles, and young relatives there. But the little girl kept mentioning her nanny aunt in Brisbane and the names of her friends there, saying, "Mom, I want to play with them, I miss them so much," and she cried. She even pleaded with her mother, "Mom, let's go to my aunt." Her mother said, "Darling, look, your aunt, your grandfather and your uncle are here," but she still didn't forget her nanny aunt in Brisbane and cried. Hümeyra said, "We had become like family with Mehmet's family, and despite the difficulties, we had lovely memories."

Hümeyra recounts: "Mehmet and his wife were very selfless people. Whenever Turkish guests from other parts of Australia or Türkiye came to Brisbane, they hosted, fed, and cared for them. Only two or three of us were in Brisbane as Hizmet affiliates, but I will never forget those sacrifices. Sometimes, we went to festivals, sold things, and tried to raise money for the school."

CHAPTER SEVEN

UNFORGETTABLE MEMORIES

This chapter consists of the memories of different individuals from various years. Each one is a beautiful memory from which valuable lessons can be learned.

Australia Zaman Newspaper First Issue (on the far left)

7.1. Why Did Zaman Newspaper Start Publishing in Australia?

In this section, I present a slightly modified version of an interview previously published in the 1000th issue of Zaman newspaper.

You are among the 'firsts' who contributed to the start of Zaman Australia's publication. How and under what conditions did you start?

- I don't see Zaman Newspaper as just a newspaper. Zaman is a school, an idea. That's how I view it. When I first came to Australia in 1987, two local newspapers were published weekly here.

Did the idea of the newspaper arise from this need?

- Yes, it arose from a very natural need. It was the 90s. It was thought, 'Let's bring newspapers from Türkiye to Australia, find subscribers, and distribute Zaman Newspaper here,' and it was done. Zaman Newspaper did this for the first time. Newspapers printed in Türkiye and brought here twice a week would sometimes arrive with a delay of 3 days, sometimes 5 days, and sometimes 11 days. We started with about 300 newspapers. Hizmet affiliates would distribute the newspapers individually to the subscribers' doors. I even know friends living in Auburn who went all the way to Campbelltown to distribute two newspapers. These friends would travel 58 km to deliver the delayed Zaman Newspaper to those there. A Hizmet affiliate would take at least 2-3 days to distribute the newspaper. Sometimes, two or three affiliates would do these tasks. They were doing it voluntarily. The cost of the airfare and printing in

Türkiye was not covered. Therefore, they were voluntarily supporting the distribution of the newspaper. I will never forget the newspaper distribution from Auburn to Campbelltown, which continued uninterrupted for 1-2 years. This was a great altruism.

In 1996, a weekly Maoist magazine in Türkiye published a list of 100 people and included Fethullah Gülen Hoca Efendi among those gangs. A weekly Turkish newspaper in Australia also took this news and published it as it was on the front page. All these spur Zaman Newspaper to start publishing weekly in Australia.

7.2. Lost Three Kilos in the First Issue

You are talking about 20 years ago. The conditions must have been tough. How did you prepare the newspaper?

- It was decided to publish Zaman Australia after consulting with the Chief Editor in Istanbul, but no experienced one could help among the Hizmet affiliates. Only one individual worked as a reporter for Zaman in Türkiye but did not have experience designing the newspaper. We had one computer. We were trying to design the pages with that computer. I didn't have any experience. Our technology at that time did not help us publish it quickly. Hizmet affiliate reporter tried hard, but we couldn't get the newspaper out. Since there was no transfer technology like the Internet, we couldn't have it done in Türkiye either. I was depressed because I could not design and publish it. It was cold at that time, but I was sweating. In a half-room-sized place behind a bookstore, I was struggling with great stress...

So, the prepared newspaper was not turning into pages.

- Yes. Publishing a newspaper is a technical job. Since we couldn't design the newspaper, we could only complete the first issue 15 days later. I was distraught because it was late. I was so worried that I lost 3 kilos due to stress during that process. For the first time, we had our weekly newspaper here. After that, the task fell to the dedicated Hizmet-affiliated Zaman readers. They contacted their friends in the Turkish community and subscribed to them. They would deliver the newspaper to their doors and Turkish shops.

7.3. Unforgettable Memories

Ensar says: "Once, we went for Umrah. Of course, the spiritual atmosphere

there is completely different. We performed the afternoon prayer with a friend named Mustafa in the Prophet's Mosque. I had the Sızıntı magazine in my hand and I was reading it. Mustafa was a little away from me. A little further ahead, there was a container of Zamzam water. I thought, 'I wish someone would bring me some of that Zamzam water.' I saw an immaculate, radiant Indian man fill two glasses with that Zamzam water, bring one to me, and take the other to my friend Mustafa. I was amazed. I thought I wouldn't tell anyone about this. Later in the evening, I met with Mustafa. He said, 'Ensar, I want to tell you something. I wasn't planning to tell anyone, but I'll tell you. While I was sitting in the Prophet's Mosque, I thought, 'I wish someone would bring me some of that Zamzam water.' While thinking this, that blessed, radiant-faced Indian man brought me a glass of Zamzam.' Ensar also said, 'Mustafa, I thought the same as you. That man brought me a glass of Zamzam water too.' Truly, this was a coincidence. And it was a like blessing."

7.4. Waste is Forbidden

Habib: "I also remember this. We held a board meeting at our home with Haşim abi a senior affiliate of Hizmet Movement. He explained in detail the responsibility of board members and who is eligible to become a board member. What was discussed at the board meeting, including its etiquette and duties from spiritual aspects? I have a memory from that day that I cannot forget because it left an indelible mark that influenced my life. I had made tea at home. The teapot was on the stove. Haşim abi asked, 'Is the stove under the teapot on?' I said, 'Yes, sir, I left it on so the tea wouldn't get cold.' He told me, 'Please turn it off because that is waste, which is forbidden in our religion.' His words had a great impact on me. Because he practised what he said. I likened each of our leading affiliates in the Hizmet Movement to a companion. Each of them had different beauties that stood out."

7.5. A Dream Seen During the Tahajjud Time

One of the board members narrates, "Since I heard from Hoca Efendi about the spiritual benefits of ablution, I started performing ablution every night before sleeping. Once, I woke up an hour before the morning prayer and went to the bathroom. I didn't perform ablution and didn't pray the Tahajjud prayer, and I went back to sleep. In my dream, I saw Hoca Efendi. He was very angry with me. I realised that I didn't have ablution and didn't pray Tahajjud. After performing

the morning prayer in the congregation with my wife, I read a few pages of the Quran. Interestingly, I came across these verses: 'And it is He who accepts repentance from his servants and pardons misdeeds, and He knows what you do. And He answers [the supplication of] those who have believed and done righteous deeds and increases [for them] from His bounty. But the disbelievers will have a severe punishment.' (Ash-Shura, 42:25-26). I thought this was not a coincidence. It was a warning for me. I repented and decided never to sleep again without performing ablution or praying Tahajjud. Since that day, I don't remember a night where I went to bed without performing ablution."

7.6. Tahir's Dream

In Late 2013, I used to like the Prime Minister of Türkiye. After 2013, he started to oppose Hoca Efendi. I immensely love Hoca Efendi, but I also liked the Prime Minister. How could such a rift happen between the two? Thinking about how the Prime Minister became such an enemy, I went to bed that night. It was as if I had performed the Istikhara prayer, wondering who was right and wrong, and I had this dream.

"The Prime Minister comes to Australia with two bodyguards. The Prime Minister asks the bodyguards, 'Where is the head of these Fethullahists?' They point to me. At that time, I was the president of the foundation affiliated with Hizmet. The Prime Minister gets angry with me, saying, 'You are writing bad things about me.' I said, 'Mr. Prime Minister, we are not writing bad things about you; we are only defending ourselves. We have nothing against you; you are attacking us, and we are defending ourselves because we are innocent.' Then, the Prime Minister sat down. After he sat down, a monster-like devil sat on him. It lifted him, said to the Prime Minister, 'You will do what I say from now on,' and sat on him. The Prime Minister, scared, did whatever the devil said." After this dream, I believed that Hoca Efendi was right.

7.7. Tahir's Second Dream: Hoca Efendi Answers Questions

Once, I saw Hoca Efendi in my dream. Hoca Efendi had come to Australia. Many people, media, and members of parliament were lined up to ask him questions. I had arranged the press. I was also interpreting for Hoca Efendi. It was a meeting where topics like how to solve the world's problems were discussed. Hoca Efendi was looking at them, and they were looking at Hoca Efendi.

7.8. The Retiree Who Started Praying

In Sydney, the land for Şule College was purchased. Volunteers set a goal to visit 400 families and ask for financial help for the school. Three of these volunteers visited a retiree. These three young people talked about the school project. Under the conditions of that day, the retiree pledged 300 dollars. After these young people left, he started praying. He narrates: "When these young people visited me, I remembered my old days. I used to pray five times a day. But somehow, I stopped. After seeing these young people, I decided to start praying again. They became a source of inspiration for me."

7.9. A Divine Favor

After repenting, starting five daily prayers at forty, and later going on pilgrimage, someone asked Garip Hoca, "Hocam, I had a work accident. I've been going to court to compensate the company for three years, but nothing is coming out of it. I'm tired and want to give up my case." Garip Hoca told him, "Why are you giving up? Since you had a work accident and have the right to compensation, don't give up your case." He said, "I'm tired of dealing with lawyers and courts." Garip Hoca told him, "If you want, go to court and make an intention that if you receive compensation, you will donate a part of it to the school, and go the court with that intention." The man decided to go to court again. Before going to court, he made an intention, "Whatever compensation I receive over ten thousand dollars, I will donate all of it to the construction of Şule College." He recalls: "The court day arrived. I went to court, and before appearing before the judge, the insurance company officials wanted to talk to me. My daughter, who was studying law, was with me and acted as my interpreter. The company offered me 32,000 dollars in compensation and suggested we settle without going to court. My daughter was delighted and told me, 'Dad, accept this offer immediately,' because they had never offered such an amount. But I said I wanted to go to court. My daughter insisted, 'Don't go, don't enter the court,' but I didn't listen and entered the courtroom.

He said, "I entered the courtroom. The judge came and was smiling at me. Normally, judges don't smile in court and are serious. The court started. The judge asked me various questions about the work accident. At that moment, a friend from the Hizmet Movement seemed in my mind and told me, 'Answer the judge's question like this, answer like that.' I answered the judge's questions accordingly. Later, the judge took a break and returned 15 minutes later to

announce the decision. The judge decided that the company should pay me 230,000 dollars in compensation. Both the insurance company officials and my family and I were truly surprised. I thought, 'This must be the blessing of wanting to donate over ten thousand dollars to the school.'

After deducting taxes, the insurance company deposited approximately 130,000 into his bank account. He wanted to donate 120,000 dollars of this money to the school construction. But his wife and daughter said, 'Are you crazy? Give 500 dollars, okay, make it a thousand dollars. If you give more than a thousand dollars, we will send you to a mental health hospital.' He explained the situation to Garip Hoca. Garip Hoca told him, 'They are very determined about this and will do it to you. So, help as much as you can with that money. Maybe you can gradually donate some of your pension to the school construction.' He donated 20,000 dollars to the school construction within a year. He was determined to donate 120,000 dollars to the school. But doing so would cause great unrest at home and in the family because his wife and daughter would never accept that. Garip Hoca told him, 'Give as much as you can, Allah will accept it.' The man saw this as a divine favour."

7.10. A Prisoner's Dream

Garip Hoca narrates: "In one of the prisons where I worked, an Irish inmate saw the footprints of Hazrat Bilal al-Habashi and heard his voice in a dream. As a result, he started researching Islam and eventually became a Muslim. He began praying five times a day and became an exemplary prisoner. This prisoner came to me and shared a dream. It was 1996. The prisoner said to me, 'Imam, some non-Muslims will use Muslims to commit great acts of terrorism and blame it on Muslims. Please, I saw this in my dream; it will happen; tell the Muslims to be vigilant.' Garip Hoca thought it was just a dream. Indeed, five years later, the 9/11 terrorist attacks occurred, and many other terrorist incidents happened, especially in the Middle East. Thus, the dream of this pure and good Muslim prisoner came true."

7.11. Ramadan, Hardship, and Divine Blessings!

Between 1990 and 1997, I worked as the first Muslim chaplain in prisons in NSW, Australia. I have many memories from which I learned valuable lessons.

Once, there was a riot in one of the prisons, and the administration collected all non-essential items from the prisoners, including alarm clocks.

One Turkish prisoner was devout in his daily prayers and fasting and was staying alone in a cell. The riot happened a few days before Ramadan, so they took his alarm clock as well. He couldn't fast without waking up for Suhoor, especially on those long days, because he was diabetic.

When I visited him after Ramadan, he said, "Hoca, I was very worried. I have always fasted during Ramadan throughout my life. If I didn't have Suhoor, my blood sugar would rise, and I might die. I decided to fast no matter what. For thirty days, an hour before dawn, a bird would peck at my cell window, and when I turned on the light, it would fly away. Ramadan ended, and I never saw that bird again." Yes, when means are exhausted and a person is sincere in their servitude, Allah, the Cause of Causes, assists. Indeed, Allah showers His grace abundantly on those who serve faith and the Quran, even in prisons.

7.12. The Desperate Prisoner

In Sydney, another prisoner wanted to wake up for Suhoor but couldn't because he had no alarm clock. As a solution, he drank much water before sleeping. Thus, when he had to wake up at night for a natural need, he would also have his Suhoor. Yes, when a person or a sincere believer is desperate, Allah, the Helper of the helpless, inspires a solution.

7.13. The Value of the First Fast and a Glass of Water

A young Australian who converted to Islam was fasting for the first time during long days. He had his first Iftar with his Muslim friends. The first day was difficult, especially because he was very thirsty. He took the water in his mouth and waited for a while at Iftar before drinking it. When asked why he waited before drinking, he said, "I have reached this age. For the first time, I learned what a great blessing water is. I wanted to think about that blessing for a while before drinking it." Yes, one of the most important wisdoms of fasting, as expressed by Said Nursi, is to appreciate the value of the blessings given. How fortunate are those who appreciate the value of every blessing and express their gratitude?

7.14. Working on School Construction While Fasting

In 1996, in Sydney, at what was then called Şule College, now known as Amity College, construction work was ongoing for placing barrack-like buildings and creating play areas for children. It was summer and Ramadan. A few

fasting young Hizmet affiliates were working voluntarily in that heat. They would work a little, rest in the shade, and continue. Because the construction needed to be completed. There was no budget for that. The work had to be done by volunteers. Seeing their sincere state, a Turkish lady passing by was very moved and sent a check for 20,000 dollars.

7.14. The Tears of Retiree

In Sydney, the land for Şule College was purchased, and efforts to establish the school had begun. By the end of the year, the land debt of 400,000 dollars needed to be paid off. At that time, this was a very large amount of money and had to be paid with the community's support. Therefore, the board members and Hizmet volunteers visited people from all walks of life to ask for help paying off this debt. Once, they visited a retiree in the city of Wollongong. They explained that they had bought the land and had a large debt. The retiree asked for permission, went to his room, and returned with a bundle of money. He said, "For the past six months, I have planted tomatoes, peppers, eggplants, cucumbers, etc., in my backyard. I took the produce to the market or sold it. I knew that one day you would visit my house to ask for help for the school. During this time, I saved about 5,000 dollars. Please take this and build the school quickly. You have taken care of our generation; let our children not be lost," and he started crying. Those who visited him also cried. He was a retiree and diabetic, and five thousand dollars was much money at that time. Despite his illness, he worked, saved money, and gave all of it to the school's construction. Later, it was understood that this retiree had a daughter who left home at a young age and never returned. He did not want other families' children to experience the same. The volunteers of the Hizmet never forgot the retiree's sacrifice and tears.

7.15. Who Treated Whom?

A pious man from Sydney goes to a psychologist to find a solution to his well-being. The psychologist asks the reason for his problems. He says, "I am very bored here. I want to live in Medina. I miss my Prophet so much," using similar expressions. The psychologist, who is a Muslim but does not practice her religion, starts crying with tears in her eyes. The pious man asks, "Why are you crying?" The psychologist says, "You came to get treated by me, but you

treated me. I was born into a Muslim family. They practised their religion, but I did not. I felt the great deficiency inside me." The man says, "I hope that this lady will practice her religion from now on."

7.15. The Child of a non-Practise Person

A non-practising Turkish Muslim had a doner kebab shop in one of Sydney's luxurious suburbs. His doner shop was open 24/7. The Hizmet volunteers would occasionally visit him and ask for help for the school. Once, he donated 1,000 dollars to the school's construction. One of the Hizmet volunteers who visited him recalls:

"About two months after he donated that money, we revisited him, and he told us something interesting. Because he had good means, he enrolled his son in a private school attended by wealthy children, and his son graduated from that high school. His son was very mischievous, did not study, and was wasteful. Since the parents were non-practice Muslims, their son did not receive any religious education. Later, his son went to Türkiye and met an affiliate from the Hizmet while vacationing in Izmir. Seeing that he came from Australia and his English was excellent, the Hizmet affiliates offered him an assistant English teacher position at Yamanlar College. He accepted it. While working as an assistant teacher at Yamanlar College, he gradually started attending Friday prayers and learning his religion. He was already in search of something. This became the beginning of a new life for him. Later, when his father called him, he said, 'Dad, I am going to the mosque for Friday prayers and learn my religion,' but his father did not believe him. However, he later realised it was true. The Hizmet volunteer said to doner kabab shop owner, 'Brother, why are you surprised? You donated money to our school and received many prayers. Not only you but your family also benefited from these prayers, and those prayers were accepted. It is not a coincidence but a blessing of Allah that your son met someone from the Hizmet Movement in Izmir and was offered a position as an assistant teacher. This shows that the prayers made were accepted.'

7.17. The Radiant Figure Seen in a Wakeful State

In Ankara, after the July 15 organised military coup to eliminate the Hizmet Movement, a woman whose husband was arrested could not find out his whereabouts for fourteen days despite calling the related law enforcement.

She thought her husband had been killed and was crying her heart out when a radiant figure dressed in white appeared in a wakeful state and said, "My daughter, why are you crying? Your husband has become an heir of Prophet Yusuf (as)." Then, she looked around and saw that the radiant figure had disappeared suddenly. After that, she felt no sorrow or grief. Allah gave her such peace in her heart that she had never experienced before.

7.18. The Volunteer Who Taught the Quran Until His Last Breath

Among the first group of immigrants to come to Australia was a man who had no formal education but knew the Quran. He voluntarily taught the Quran for over forty years until a few days before his death. A day before his death, he had a stroke. In the hospital, he told his son-in-law, "Call my friends; I want to say goodbye. I saw Mawlana Jalal Din Rumi and Bediuzzaman Said Nursi in my dream. They said they are expecting me tomorrow at the afternoon prayer." Indeed, the next day, at the time of the afternoon prayer, he passed away.

An eighty-five-year-old Hizmet affiliate, who was very ill, was still struggling, saying, "I wonder if I can find more scholarship?" He was not hopeless about what he had and didn't have. He tried to fulfil his duty until his last breath. One of his friends told me nine years ago, "This person will volunteer until his last breath. If he doesn't, he will die." Indeed, it was so. He was both old and sick but still tried to do volunteer work.

7.19. Those Who Accused of Hashishism Are Now Judged for Hashishism

In a hadith, it is said, "Whoever blames his brother for a sin, he will not die until he commits that sin."[139] In Australia, those who accused the Hizmet volunteers of hashishism, despite having no connection to hashishism, are now being sentenced for drug smuggling. Even a famous Turkish doctor said, "Thanks to the Hizmet schools, the rate of drug use among Turkish youth has significantly decreased." In a survey, the rate of alcohol use in high schools in Australia was 80%, and drug use was a quarter of that. In a survey, while there was no drug use in the Hizmet school, only about one per cent used alcohol.

7.20. Rights of Others and Hoca Efendi

Garip Hoca recalls that the year was 1997...Hoca Efendi had come to the USA

139 Tirmidhi, 53, no: 2507.

for medical treatment. We went to Friday prayer in New Jersey by car. After the prayer, we couldn't get out because they had double-parked behind our car. A young friend said, "Sir, please don't wait. We can return with my car." Hoca Efendi didn't want to disappoint the young man, so he got into his car and returned to the dersane where he was staying. After returning from Friday prayer, he called me and said, "Can you write a letter in English?" I was curious but said, "Gladly, sir." Then he said, "The car I got into while returning from the mosque was not the young man's but belonged to a company owned by non-Muslims where he worked. I learned this when I asked the young man on the way. I wanted to get out because I got into the car without the company's owners' permission, but I couldn't because I didn't know how to get dersane and don't know English. Can you write to the company owners asking for their forgiveness for getting in their car without permission and also ask them to accept this small gift?" I gladly wrote it.

He sent the letter to the company's two owners along with a pair of chine plates as gifts. The company owners couldn't believe it at first. They asked, "Do such people still exist in the world?" As you know, some companies give cars to their employees to use. We all use them, and it never even crosses our minds to ask for permission. Until that day, I had personally given countless sermons about the rights of others over twenty years, preached from the mosque pulpit. But Hoca Efendi's action affected me more deeply than all the sermons I had read and preached over twenty years. Hoca Efendi acted like this throughout his life. He faced many hardships because he never deviated from the right path. He endured all kinds of suffering, saw all kinds of persecution, and faced all sorts of slander. Bediuzzaman said, "Let our heads also be sacrificed for a sacred truth for which thousands of heads have been sacrificed."[140] Yes, the rights of others are also sacred. Hoca Efendi, who asked for forgiveness for getting in a car owned by two people without their permission; the people of misguidance and envy who usurped the property of the ummah, calling it spoils... This is the difference between them regarding the rights of others.

7.21. Medicine Money

The year was 1999... The oppression of the February 28 post-modern coup continued with all its intensity against the volunteers of the Hizmet Movement in Türkiye. At that time, I was in New York. We were given a scholarship

140 Bediüzzaman Said Nursi, Şualar, s.373

that barely allowed us to get by, and it was three months behind... Because the pressure and oppression prevented those who gave scholarships from continuing to do so.

We needed to open a cultural centre to teach children their language, religion, and good morals. At that time, resources were minimal. Almost no wealthy board members in New York could provide financial support; there were only houses where students stayed. On the one hand, we were trying to open a cultural centre.

Whenever I visited Hoca Efendi, he asked if we had found a place for the cultural centre. A few months later, we found a building and rented it. I set out to give the good news without wasting any time. I was so happy on the way that I couldn't hold back my tears. As soon as I arrived, I told him the news; he was delighted, too. After performing the Friday prayer, he invited me to his room.

He showed me some money wrapped in a newspaper in his desk drawer. With tears in his eyes, he said, "This is money for my medication, but the education of two children is more important than my life. Take it and use it for the furnishing of the cultural centre. "

I said, "Hocam, the affiliates will handle the furnishing," but when he insisted, "Take it," I took it so as not to be disrespectful; I couldn't hold back my tears either.

The rest? Neither you ask nor I tell... Hoca Efendi has had ongoing heart issues, high blood pressure, and diabetes for years; if he doesn't take his medicine, his life is at risk at any moment. Despite that, he donated his money for medication to furnish the cultural centre.

7.22. The First School Opened in America and Hoca Efendi's Suffering

It was mid-August 1999. Two or three weeks are left until the schools open in the USA. A building had been rented in one of the states, and renovations were ongoing. The goal was to open the school in September. The negative impact of the February 28 semi-military coup was continuing. But for those with true faith, every opposing wind is a new source of strength and nitrogen to realise their ideals. The earthquake in Türkiye in August had saddened us, like everyone else. After the prayer, I was having lunch with Hoca Efendi. At that moment, the person dealing with the school's opening arrived. Hoca Efendi asked him if the renovation would be completed on time. He replied,

"The contractor we agreed with did not keep his word. The renovation will be completed in at least two months, so the school will unfortunately not be ready for this year." Hoca Efendi was very upset and said, "Return immediately, let all the friends there work to death. Do whatever it takes to get the school ready for this year." The person in charge who had travelled for nine hours, performed the obligatory prayer and, in his tired state, set off for the school whose construction would not be completed.

Hoca Efendi must have been so upset that he kept his routine programs short that day and did not give his usual talks. At that time, there was only one two-story house with six rooms in the camp where he stayed. On the one hand, there were infrastructure impossibilities for visiting, and on the other hand, there was a heavy flow of visitors, as always... Because the rooms were full of visitors, I could only find a place to sleep on the attic floor with a blanket. Due to the lack of sound insulation in constructing the two-story house, the walls transmitted sound. The place I found on the second floor was close to Hoca Efendi's room. In the late-night hours, I woke up to Hoca Efendi's groans. Prayers, sobs, and groans were mixed. If I expressed it this way, I wouldn't be exaggerating; it was like the crying and groaning of a mother who lost her four children in a traffic accident before her eyes... This scene affected me greatly. I said to myself, "Lazy man, get up, perform ablution, pray two rak'ahs, and at least participate in his prayers."

After the morning prayer, I had to take the guests to a distant place. After performing ablution, praying two rak'ahs, and a short prayer, I wanted to sleep. But as I heard Hoca Efendi's crying and groaning, my heart felt like it would stop. I couldn't stand it and went to sleep in the farthest corner of the attic. Due to his discomfort, Hoca Efendi couldn't give his usual Risale lesson after the morning prayer and retreated to his room. I asked the friend on duty there about Hoca Efendi. He said: 'Hoca Efendi couldn't sleep until morning,' he said. Later, I learned that when Hoca Efendi was 14-15 years old, he prayed, "O Allah, make me cry a lot like Ibrahim (AS) so that I may be avvah, make me cry so much that my eyes become blind like Yaqub (AS)." Since then, he has always cried for this ummah's troubles and humanity's darkness. Sometimes, his crying makes him faint.

Meanwhile, with the efforts of Hizmet affiliates dealing with the school's issue, Hoca Efendi's suffering, and Allah's grace, the school, whose construction was incomplete, was ready for the education season.

So, how did the school open? While discussing the issue among themselves, someone suggested renting four buses that had been converted into classrooms. They started education in the school's yard with about a hundred students in the converted bus classes. Two months later, they moved into the building and continued their education in the main buildings. This is how the foundations of the dozens of schools in America, which some people talk about, were laid with sacrifices, and metaphorically speaking, with tears, sweat, effort, and sacrifices.

Yes, establishing every institution of Hizmet involves sacrifice, suffering, pain, tears, and groans. The envious usurp and put them up for sale. Do you think the usurpation and exploitation of these institutions, established with immense effort, will go unpunished? With Allah's grace and generosity, these institutions will serve even greater functions in the future than they do now. But there is one condition: When asked, "Are you still active in the Hizmet Movement?" The affiliate in Sydney replied, "Yes, because if I stop, I will die." When we stop, there is no need for the Machiavellian sword of the people of disbelief or the envious; we are already dead.

Suppose we do our best regardless of the circumstances. In that case, the fire of Nimrod will turn into a rose garden, pressures will turn into conquests, and oppressions will turn into sweet memories in paradise because this has always been the fate of this path and will continue to be so. Blessed are those who grit their teeth and run like thoroughbreds on this path with active patience...

7.23. Tears After Breakfast

When the number of Hizmet volunteers in Sydney was still 10-15 people, they dreamed of establishing a school. They even mentioned this in various meetings occasionally and started looking for land. However, answering how the school would be established and where the money would come from was challenging. Four Hizmet volunteers had breakfast at a friend's house one Sunday morning. After breakfast, they discussed among themselves, "We promised the community that we would establish a school, but we don't have the means. How will we do it?" Upon hearing this, Ömer stepped forward and said, "Dear Brothers, don't worry. I will sell my house and two businesses, and with Allah's grace and generosity, we will establish this school." Everyone at the breakfast table cried.

7.24. The School Was Like Their Home

Hakan narrates: "In those years (1996-1998), all school staff, including the principal and teachers, did all the work at the school. If there was cleaning work, everyone would immediately run to do it; if there was another task at the school, friends would eagerly volunteer.

For some Hizmet affiliates, the school was like their home. They would visit every day, and sometimes, they would act emotionally. If they saw a small mistake, they would get angry. One of Hizmet's affiliates, who was neither a teacher nor an administrator, came so often that we no longer wanted him to visit because he frequently interfered with some tasks, which caused some discomfort. I told that friend who frequently visits, 'Could you come a little less often, I mean, not visit the school so frequently?' He got angry with me and said, 'It's all your fault. If I hadn't met you or Halit Hoca, none of this would have happened,' and he reproached me. I was fasting that day, and I remembered the Hadith of our Prophet, 'Especially when you are fasting, do not say ugly or bad words! If someone provokes you, say, "I am fasting!"'[141] So I did not respond to him."

7.25. The Unforgettable Speech of the State Premier

Zübeyir recalls: "Once, as friends and school administrators, we wanted to visit the state premier. We finally visited him and briefly explained who we were and our educational activities. The state premier said, 'You have raised the educational quality of the Turkish community. Twenty years ago, there were more Turks in prisons.' Of course, we felt a bit embarrassed when he said this. Then, we invited the premier to give a speech at our school, and he said he would come at a suitable time.

Later, the premier visited our school and gave a speech to our students. In his speech, he emphasised three important points: 'Children,' he said, 'learn your religion from your Holy Book because people who learn religion from incorrect sources cause more problems. Secondly, preserve your culture because Australia is a multicultural society. By doing this, you contribute to this multiculturalism. Thirdly, as far as I can see, you were born and raised here. Serve and contribute to the society here.'

141 Bukhari,

The premier's speech was meaningful to us. We even shared his words in meetings with parents and our community relations. In the following years, we saw that our community valued education and made efforts to send their children to university. In short, our school's educational activities, our students who went to university, or our graduates became an example and an inspiration for the Turkish community.

The boards of directors of institutions engaged in educational activities became more courageous over time. Because they also saw that sacrifices, efforts, and bold steps yielded results. Sometimes, they understandably found it difficult to accept some projects we proposed due to a lack of funds. But they supported it with all their might when they believed something would happen."

7.26. Can a Hafiz of the Quran Intercede? The Child's Answer

In Australia, there are two brothers from the Hizmet, and both are hafiz (memorisers of the Quran). One has received his hafiz certificate, but the other has not. Once, they visited a friend. The friend told the two hafiz brothers, "How fortunate you are. You will intercede for your relatives hereafter and take them to paradise." The eight-year-old child of the hafiz turned to his uncle and said, "My uncle cannot take his relatives to paradise because he doesn't have a hafiz certificate!" Everyone enjoyed the child's remark, and it became a saying among people.

Yes, the reward for memorising the Quran is a remarkable act of worship. The Messenger of Allah explained that those who learn and teach the Quran are the best people.[142]Also gave unique value to those who memorised and acted upon the Quran. He stated that they are the people of Allah and His chosen servants,[143] That they will enter paradise and that they will intercede for ten of their family members[144] who deserve to enter hell.[145]

7.27. Urgent Need for Money and the Silent Hero

142 Bukhârî, Fedâilü'l-Qur'an, 21; Ebû Dâvûd, Witr, 14.

143 Müslim, Salâtü'l-Müsâfirîn, 244; Ebu Dâvûd, Witr, 14.

144 Tirmidhi Fedâilü'l-Qur'an, 13.

145 Sorularla İslamiyet, https://sorularlaislamiyet.com/kuran-hafizlarin-sefaat-hakki-var-midir-hafizlarin-kuran-ile-amel-ettikleri-takdirde-kac-kisiye

The school urgently needed money in the first year of Şule College's establishment. The board meeting discussed and debated the issue of where to find this money, how to find it, and from whom to get it. Finally, it was decided that all board members and Hizmet affiliates would go to their acquaintances and ask for donations. They would accept whatever was given, even just one dollar. If money was not found, education could stop. There was a very quiet friend in the trustees who rarely spoke. This affiliate usually made and served tea for the board members and volunteers.

A week later, when the board members and volunteers gathered, everyone explained what they had done, whom they had visited, and whether they had found any money. This silent hero of volunteers said, "My social side is weak. I don't know many people. I thought about what to do, and then came up with this idea. I went to all the shops in the Auburn neighbourhood with a receipt book in hand and asked for a donation. I asked everyone, regardless of whether they were Muslim or non-Muslim." At that time, most of the shops in that area were owned by non-Muslims. This quiet person collected 50 cents from some, one dollar from others, five dollars from some, three dollars from others, and ten dollars from some, bringing 150 dollars. Garip Hoca said, "Honestly, I will never forget this volunteer's courage and heroism. Because not everyone can do this, but he did." Indeed, in the board meeting, Garip Hoca told him, 'You have become a model for us with what you did. You earned more rewards than all of us. Because it is easy to go to someone you know, but it is challenging to go to someone you don't know, especially if they are non-Muslim." But he went to everyone.

In the board meeting, they were discussing how to overcome the financial problem the school was facing. Everyone was expressing their opinions. Nasreddin, known for his jokes, was also asked for his opinion. He said, "The solution is "ev et" in Turkish." When the questioner said, "I could not understand," Nasreddin said, "Sell your house," meaning those who have a house should sell it, and butchers and doner sellers should sell their shops and donate the money. The sad atmosphere in the trustees' meeting suddenly changed, and everyone started laughing. Nasreddin's jokes like this always boosted morale.

7.28. Don't Say It Can't Happen

A very witty and dual-natured oppressed person narrates. He always boosted

the morale of the downtrodden in prison with his jokes. On the day he was to be released, the inmates cried a lot. One of them loved him so much that he sometimes thought, "I wish this friend wouldn't be released." Yes, the oppressed are always esteemed. If not today, then tomorrow, this will be the case, God willing. Even for the worldly, it happens, so why not for the people of the hereafter? In the future, all the oppressed who maintain their integrity will become the leaders of hearts.

7.29. A lover of Education

I visited Ibrahim Dellal, a traveller on the path of truth, now 87 years old and a Seyyid, in the hospital. He is the grandson of Sheikh Mehmet Abdul Al, the last Ottoman Mufti of Cyprus. He migrated to Australia in 1948. There was neither a mosque nor an association. After much searching, he found a place called the Mohammedan Chapel at Fawkner Cemetery, built for Afghan camel drivers who had migrated earlier, where 7-8 people could pray. For years, he performed Friday prayers there with 3-5 people. Later, he actively established the Carlton, Preston, Coburg, and Sunshine mosques and the five-campus Işık (Sirius) College. In 1968, he welcomed the first group of Turkish immigrants at the airport, dressing his children in national attire. He helped them at every stage for years.

In 1990, after listening to Mehmet Ali Şengül Hoca Efendi's sermon on love at Coburg Mosque, he said, "I found what I have been looking for for years," and joined the Hizmet Movement as a volunteer for about 27 years. He cared about schools, scholarships, students, teachers, and his cause, having no other concern. His concern was always to be a remedy for those in distress. We travelled to Canada together in 2007. I saw that he was being held up at customs in Los Angeles. It lasted 15 minutes. Then I asked, "Brother, what happened? Why did they hold you up?" He said, "No, the customs officer asked about Islam. I took the opportunity to explain Islam to him. I told him that Americans have a wrong understanding of Islam."

He also visited Hoca Efendi in the USA. He wished Hoca Efendi would give him the prayer rug he prayed on. A little later, Hoca Efendi came to his room with the prayer rug.

Even in his hospital bed, he talked about scholarships, education, and the need to open universities in every state of Australia, not his illness.

In the hospital, he said, "I am both learning from the nurses and teaching them Islam." Listening to the lover of education reminded me of Abdullah, the father of Jabir, who was martyred at Uhud. Seeing his crying orphans, the Prophet asked Jabir, "Allah has taken your father to His presence. Ask me for anything you wish." Abdullah said, "O Lord, send me back to the world so that I may be martyred again." Allah said, "I have decreed that martyrs will not return."[146]

I concluded that if Allah were to take Ibrahim to His presence and ask him the same question, he would say, "Send me back to the world. Let me build schools. Let me collect scholarships for poor students and serve humanity again."

7.30. The Unforgettable British Mahmud

About 31 years ago, an elderly British who converted to Islam and took the name Mahmud is someone I will never forget. In his youth, he served as an exceptional soldier for the Queen. He heard the call to prayer for the first time in Egypt, which sparked his curiosity about Islam. A few years before his death, while in a nursing home, he became a Muslim. He was old and had no strength to walk, and his knees didn't work. He would attend the Friday prayer at the Redfern Mosque in Sydney every Friday. Because he could not walk, someone would bring him. Mahmud will stay at the mosque until 10 pm to attend the spiritual study circle with the youth before being taken back to the nursing home. Since I was the mosque imam at the time, he once told me, "I received five thousand dollars from work compensation, and I want to donate it all to the mosque."

It was the first time in my life that I encountered someone who wanted to donate all their money. I could not accept the whole of his donation, but I didn't want to prevent his good deed from happening either. I told him to donate 1500 dollars to the mosque and keep the rest for his funeral expenses and any future needs.

Once, when the young man who usually picked him up couldn't go, Mahmud walked the 600-700 meters to the mosque with his four-legged cane, taking small steps like a baby, crossing a busy street, and arriving there in two hours. I told him, "The reward you earned today is enough for you." He replied,

146 Ibn Majah, No 190 https://sunnah.com/ibnmajah%3A190?utm_source=chatgpt.com

"I feel great peace and serenity in the mosque, and I didn't want to miss this opportunity." Then he passed away and met his Lord. May he rest in peace.

Yes, it is so. Some lose just as they are about to cross the finish line, while others who have lagged behind win at the last moment.

7.31. A Bit of Humour: Number 100!

Someone I have known for years from the mosque congregation in Australia says that he was troubled a lot by two things in his life. One is his surname, and the other is his house's street number. Because his surname is Demirel, those who were not supporters of Suleyman Demirel, the former prime minister and president of Türkiye, teased him and made fun of him. The man's house street number was 100. When giving his address in Turkish, he would say "yüznumara" (which used to be slang for a toilet in Turkish), and people would make fun of him again. Initially, to avoid this, he would say "99 plus one" or "101 minus one" for his house number, but this only confused people more. Eventually, he applied to the Australian court to change his house street number. He told the judge, "My house street number is 100, which has a bad meaning in Turkish. My friends make fun of me, and I want to change it." The judge replied, "It doesn't have a bad meaning in English. This is Australia, not Türkiye," and so, the case was declined. In the end, Mr. Demirel's one-month salary went to court expenses. He should forgive me, but he still lives at "number 100," or instead "99 plus one." This is an example of the difficulties and harms of thinking with a "Türkiye mindset" while living or acting in Australia.

7.32. From "As If I Ate" Mosque to "As If I Ate" Scholarships

In the 18th century, a low-income tradesman named Keçecizade Hayreddin Efendi wanted to build a mosque after hearing about the virtues of building one, but he had no money. However, he found a way to build the mosque. Whenever he wanted to eat something, he would say, "As if I ate!" beside the essential food to survive and set aside money. Twenty years later, he built a charming mosque in Fatih, Istanbul with the money he saved. The mosque is still remembered as the "As If I Ate Mosque" among the people.

Inspired by Keçecizade Hayreddin, someone in Australia has brought from home instead of eating out for the past twenty years. He also avoids buying coffee from outside unless necessary, making his coffee in his office.

In this way, he saves 20 dollars every day. Over twenty years, he has saved approximately 100,000 dollars this way. He uses these savings to provide scholarships to poor students and for charitable works. I know that this person has given students around 100,000 dollars as scholarships over the past twenty years.

7.33. The Soldier Who Saluted Bediüzzaman

During the years when Bediüzzaman faced oppression, he once passed by a barracks and saluted a soldier on guard duty. This soldier, who did not practice his faith at the time, later immigrated to Australia. Finally, one day, he repented and started five daily prayers. Let's hear the rest from him: "When I started praying, it was difficult for me to wake up for fajr prayer. Bediüzzaman would wake me up for prayer every morning till I got used to prayer and woke up by myself.

7.34. The Fruit of Dialogue

In 2000, Hizmet volunteers established the Australia Intercultural Society in Melbourne and the Affinity Intercultural Foundation in Sydney to conduct dialogue activities. The association in Melbourne wanted to hold "Mosque Open Day" events to introduce Islam to non-Muslims. However, initially, no mosque board agreed to this. They did not want non-Muslims to enter the mosque without ablution. Finally, the Turkish Cypriots agreed to hold such a program at their mosque in the Sunshine. People were curious about Islam and Muslims. In the first year, hundreds of people came to the mosque and received information about Islam, Muslims, and mosque architecture. A few months later, Hizmet volunteers held the same program at the Gallipoli Mosque in Sydney, built in Ottoman architecture, and even more people came to the mosque and received information. Then, other boards of mosques saw this benefit and started conducting mosque open days as well. Now, every year in October, dozens of mosques in Australia hold "Mosque Open Day," with political leaders and government officials attending, and thousands of people come to learn about Islam and Muslims.[147]

147 Salih Yucel, Tajdid (Renewal) by Embodiment: Examining the Globalization of the First Mosque Open Day in Australian History, Religions 2022, 13(8), 705; https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13080705

A friend who served as an administrator at the association in Sydney for eight years said, "Thanks to dialogue activities, we reached over eighty thousand people in eight years." This is the case all over the world. We don't know the exact number, but I am sure millions of non-Muslims have been reached in the last 25 years. Most Islamic associations worldwide engage in dialogue, even if it is just imitation. Yes, Islam is a religion of peace and thrives in peace. After the Treaty of Hudaybiyyah, the number of Muslims in Arabia increased approximately thirtyfold within three years.

Mosque open days have become an opportunity to strive against misconceptions about Islam and Muslims and an antidote for Islamophobia.

7.35. In Memory of Teacher Orhan

Sirius College Teacher Orhan Kurucu, who set out on a journey for an ideal in Melbourne, passed away at a young age from cancer. According to his relatives, he smiled, felt heavenly scents before his death, and recited the Shahada. After sleeping and waking up, he said, "They took me to the Kaaba and I had surgery there. I will go now, and Hz. Fatima will take care of my children." After sleeping again and waking up, he said, "Untie my feet (he hadn't been able to walk for the last three days), they took me to the Kaaba and I had surgery there. I ran there," and he wanted to get up and walk. Then he said, "I have debts to two people. I need to pay them." Indeed, a friend had left money for medicine, and another had brought a bed for his brother. Then he said, "I have missed prayer," and acted like he was reading the Quran and praying. His brother said, "I have seen many funerals. My brother Orhan was as pure as a martyr." After he was washed, Ensar Bey from the board members of Selimiye Foundation, who saw the light on his face, said, "Seeing the light on his face reassured my heart that we are on the right path." When his body was being buried, many pigeons came. Someone working in the cemetery for the past three years said, "I have buried many dead people. This is the first time I have seen such pigeons."

Another sister saw the mother of believers Aisha in her dream. After praying for the sister, Aisha said, "I am going to visit Orhan Hoca's wife."

We met about ten years ago, and since he was the closest Turk living near me, his number was saved in my phone as 'Orhan neighbour.' After graduating from university in Türkiye, he migrated to Indonesia to realise his high ideals. Then, he came to Australia with the same idea.

While working at Sirius College, the late Orhan Kurucu always strived for his students to study, attend university, and have moral values. While teachers in other schools worked from 9 to 4, he and others like him made efforts to provide better education without looking at working hours, evenings, weekends, and holidays. Sometimes, Orhan Hoca worked as a labourer in school construction without pay. He also donated part of his salary back to the foundations to which the schools were affiliated. The efforts of Orhan Kurucu were not in vain. Sirius College, formerly known as Işık, has repeatedly ranked first or in the top five among over 400 high schools in university entrance exams in Victoria over the past 20 years, with very modest resources.

7.36. The Kindy Garden Student Who Inspired His Parents to Pray

A non-practising Turkish Muslim enrolled his five-year-old child in Şule College in its first year upon the insistence of a dear friend. Let's hear the rest from him: "My wife and I did not pray. We were cultural Muslims. It was about two months after I enrolled my daughter in school. Once, I went to her room to see what she was doing and saw her praying. She didn't know how to pray but was bowing and prostrating. I called my wife. When we both looked at her, we cried our hearts out. We had reached this age but were not praying. Our five-year-old daughter inspired us, and we both started praying."

7.37. Who Can Do Such an Altruism?

One of the first board members of Feza Foundation in Sydney was working in a ministry in Australia with a salary of 70,000 dollars. He was delighted with his job, and his administrators were highly pleased with his work. Additionally, the ministry had provided him with a brand-new car. When Şule College opened in Sydney, he needed to leave his job and work at the college. Upon the board's request, this Hizmet affiliate left his job at the ministry and started working at the college with a salary of approximately 35,000 dollars. He also donated 5,000 dollars of this salary to the college as himmet. His sacrifice will undoubtedly go down in history books. He was a young man who grew up in Australia and was still in his youth. While his peers were pursuing pleasure and worldly desires, he dedicated himself to raising a sound generation. His sacrifices were still ongoing as this book was being written.

CONCLUSION

In this book, I tried to present the activities, altruism, difficulties, sufferings, spiritual feelings, and states of the first Hizmet immigrants and those who supported Hizmet in its early years. The hardships they endured bore fruit and turned into lovely memories. Just as rain falling on the ground causes various plants to sprout, their tears contribute to the spiritual revival of people. The spiritual study circles held with three or five people in the 1980s grew and reached tens of thousands like a seed planted in the ground, becoming a tree. The institutionalisation that began with first dersane, Darül Erkam, eventually led to the establishment of dozens of educational institutions where thousands of students were educated. Yes, Allah does not let the seeds sown by sincere people for His sake go to waste and makes them flourish when the time comes. This has also been the case in Australia.

Their activities have inspired other Muslims over time. For example, himmet meetings, large-scale collection and distribution of qurbans abroad, youth camps, inviting non-Muslims to mosques to introduce them to Islam and Muslims, institutional dialogue activities with non-Muslims, organising community iftar for non-Muslims and parliamentary iftars are some of the events they have organised. You will read about how these started in the next volume, God willing.

I do not claim to have done justice to this research. However, I tried to reflect on the activities and experiences as much as possible. The faith, love, affection, and principles taught by their guides for the benefit of humanity motivated them to do this. While making these sacrifices, Allah also inspired happiness in their hearts and spiritual pleasure in their souls.

According to Ibn Sina, they experienced intellectual happiness while doing all this. Ibn Sina says there are three types of happiness. The first is animalistic happiness: in this type of happiness, a person eats, drinks, sleeps, and enjoys some worldly pleasures. However, this is temporary happiness and

not permanent. The second is imaginary happiness: this is the desire to possess worldly things, have a home and a job, and achieve positions and ranks, which are inherent in human nature. But these do not bring true happiness. If they did, people in developed countries would be happiest today. But we see that people in developed countries are often not happy. The statistics confirm this. The rates of people seeing psychologists are very high in these countries. Suicide rates are very high. This shows that they have not achieved true happiness. The third is intellectual happiness: according to Ibn Sina, this type of happiness involves helping others in every way, instilling good human qualities in them, using the thousands of feelings given by Allah according to their purpose of creation, and achieving true inner peace. This happiness is permanent and continues both in this world and the hereafter. According to Ibn Sina, prophets are at the peak of this happiness. After them, those who follow the prophets, their companions, and those who follow their path achieve this intellectual happiness according to the degree of their faith. If this happiness did not exist, it would not have been possible for them to overcome or endure the great difficulties they faced.

We can say the same for Hizmet volunteers. If they had not achieved spiritual pleasure, as Bediüzzaman puts it, or intellectual happiness, as Ibn Sina describes it, they would not have been able to make these sacrifices, endure the difficulties, or establish so many institutions. I pray to Allah that the memories in this book will inspire future generations and that they will continue this beautiful Hizmet with love and affection, benefiting humanity regardless of language, religion, or race. May they become sultans of hearts and model their beautiful qualities for humanity.